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RETURN FROM THE FIELDS
VI:11:1



Courtesy Scott & Fowles Co.

PEASANT AND CHILD
MILLET



Courtesy M. Knodler & Co.

SHEEP SHEARERS
MILLET



ction of Vanderbilt

THE SOWER
MILLET

THE BARBIZON PAINTERS

*BEING THE STORY OF THE
MEN OF THIRTY*

BY

ARTHUR HOEBER

ASSOCIATE OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF DESIGN

*WITH EIGHTY-SEVEN ILLUSTRATIONS AFTER PAINTINGS
MAINLY FROM AMERICAN COLLECTIONS*



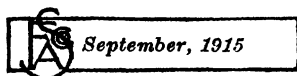
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CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	xiii
JEAN FRANÇOIS MILLET	3
JEAN BAPTISTE CAMILLE COROT	85
NARCISSE VIRGILIO DIAZ DE LA PEÑA	129
JULES DUPRÉ	161
CONSTANT TROYON	191
PIERRE ÉTIENNE THÉODORE ROUSSEAU	213
CHARLES FRANÇOIS DAUBIGNY	249
CHARLES ÉMILE JACQUE	275
BIBLIOGRAPHY	291
INDEX	293

ILLUSTRATIONS

MILLET

RETURN FROM THE FIELDS	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
BOY AND DOG	6
A WATER CARRIER	7
GARDEUSE DES MOUTONS	7
SELF PORTRAIT	16
A WATTEAU PANEL	16
THE BATHER	17
ŒDIPUS TAKEN FROM A TREE	18
THE POTATO HARVEST	19
THE DIGGERS	19
STUBBLE BURNING	30
WASHING DAY	30
THE END OF THE DAY	31
THE HOUSE OF JEAN F. MILLET	31
PEASANT AND CHILD	38
SHEEP SHEARERS	38
THE SOWER	39
THE SHEPHERDESS	42
SHEEP SHEARING	42
THE FIRST STEPS	43
THE NEW BORN CALF	43
GOING TO WORK	50
SPRING	66
MADONNA OF THE FIELDS	66
THE SHEPHERDESS	67
SUPPERTIME	67

ILLUSTRATIONS

COROT

	FACING PAGE
PORTRAIT OF COROT	88
UPRIGHT LANDSCAPE	88
NEAR FONTAINEBLEU	89
BY THE POND	89
LANDSCAPE NEAR PARIS	100
THE MILL	100
VIEW OF GISERS	101
THE WOOD CUTTERS	101
DANCING NYMPHS	104
LANDSCAPE	104
THE FLOWER WREATH	105
WATER CARRIER	105
DANCE D'AMOURS	110
THE BATHERS	111
COUP DE VENT	111
MEN IN BOAT	116
LANDSCAPE AND CATTLE	116

DIAZ

THE FROG POND	132
LANDSCAPE	132
IN THE FOREST	133
LANDSCAPE	133
THE BRACELET	142
DEEP WOODLAND	143
FONTAINEBLEU	143
SOUS BOIS	150
CHILDREN FISHING	151
LA MARE	151

DUPRE

CATTLE IN POOL	164
THE OAK	164

ILLUSTRATIONS

	FACING PAGE
LANDSCAPE	165
LE COURS D'EAU	165
THE OLD OAK	176
RETURN OF THE FLOCK	176
RETURN FROM THE FIELD	177

TROYON

COWS RESTING	196
LANDSCAPE AND CATTLE	196
GOING TO MARKET	197
THE SHEPHERD	197
THREE COWS	200

ROUSSEAU

PORTRAIT OF ROUSSEAU	226
LA FERME SOUS BOIS	227
BOSQUET D'ARBES	227
LANDSCAPE AT PICARDIE	236
LA FERME	236
LANDSCAPE	237

DAUBIGNY

LANDSCAPE	250
LA SOULAIE	250
ON THE OISE	251
ON THE SEINE	251
ON THE OISE	258
THE SEA	258
SUNRISE ON THE OISE	259
EVENING ON THE OISE	259
A BREEZY DAY IN SUMMER	259
LAVEUSES À ANVERS	268

ILLUSTRATIONS

JACQUE

	FACING PAGE
SHEPHERD, SHEEP AND LAMB	276
LA SORTIE DE TROUPEAU	277
RETURN OF THE FLOCK	277
SHEEP IN THE FOREST	280
AT THE FARM	281
TROUPEAU DES MOUTONS	281
SHEEP AND SHEPHERD	284
SHEPHERDESS AND SHEEP	284

INTRODUCTION

STRANGELY enough, the great development of the landscape art of the nineteenth century is associated with the name of a little obscure French village, on the borders of the Forest of Fontainebleau, Barbizon, a hamlet that, but for the story of the group of earnest, gifted artists with their trials, struggles, tragedies, modest joys, would have remained forever unknown, save to the casual passer-by. A thousand such quiet little villages exist throughout the domains of the Gallic Republic, but none possesses such great attraction for the painter of the woodland, the plains, the quiet glades and pastures; for here nature seems to have spent herself in supplying material for pictorial representation. Here, back in the thirties of the nineteenth century, drifted, quite accidentally, a number of men destined to make art history. They were men with rare determination and application, single

of purpose, deadly serious in their attitude toward their profession, who achieved great results and changed the standards of landscape art; and though they lived to taste a measure of success toward the end, they never knew to the full the great places they had made for themselves in the history of art. Never in their wildest moments did they dream of the great acclaim that was to greet their canvases as the years rolled by.

The story of these "Men of Thirty," as the "Barbizon Painters" are sometimes called, is like some curious romance, almost unbelievable in the subsequent development; for their canvases, once ignored by all save a few, to-day have the value of rare and precious jewels, bring prices beyond all bounds, are fairly fought for when they come up in the auction rooms or the shops of the dealers. They command in many instances fortunes, single pictures often bringing more than enough to have supported the artist in the greatest luxury during a long life, the high-water mark having been reached when *The Angelus*, by Jean

François Millet, realised at public auction in Paris, in 1889, over half a million francs! Thirty years before, in 1859, Millet had sold it for two thousand francs. And while these men were waiting for recognition, while they suffered from neglect of the official arbiters of art in the exhibitions, while butcher, baker, and colourman were haunting their doors for modest bills, they never faltered in their fidelity to the highest principles, never wavered in their splendid ideals, but kept manfully on, despite opposition, discouragement—hunger, even, at times; and there were kept up friendships loyally, with assistance from one to the other when by chance any of the group came upon a measure of temporary financial success. They had indeed the faith that moves mountains, the wonderful industry that makes for results, the confidence born of supreme belief in self; and their lives constitute an object lesson for the painters of all times.

It was back in 1824 that two artists, their names Claude Aligny and Philippe Le Dieu, discovered the little hamlet of Barbizon, having

wandered down to Fontainebleau to visit a friend in the porcelain manufactory there. They had started out in the quest of some woodland material for sketches and, exploring the forest, found themselves lost at evening. A shepherd led them to Barbizon, allowed them to sleep on the straw with his sheep, and the next day the beauties of the place so impressed them that they remained to paint, spreading the news of their find among their artist friends. A peasant named Ganne supplied them with food and finally took them into his house as lodgers. Other artists came, and this Ganne built a hotel whither the painters flocked about 1830. There wandered Corot, Rousseau, Diaz, Dupré, Barye, and others. It is said that between 1825 and 1860 nearly every French artist of note, and many others from all parts of Europe, at one time or another found their way to Barbizon.

Probably no village in all the world has felt the march of improvement less than has Barbizon, which to-day is much as it was in those far away years when the first painters came.

For while the automobile now whisks by, with its rumble of machinery, or a trolley passes where only a lumbering carriage was to be seen, the one street, long and straggling, remains much the same, the air of tranquillity and even sleepiness still prevailing. Nothing ever happens there, save for the occasional visit of some one bent on an art pilgrimage, or the prolonged stay of a modest group of painters. A few strangers reach the town by automobile; but its fame is worldwide. When it is spoken of there come up a crowd of memories of those great men whose names are forever associated with the place—Millet, Rousseau, Diaz, Dupré, Daubigny, Corot, Troyon, Charles Jacque, and others whose canvases are included in most of the galleries of Europe and America. Not all of these, either, painted so long a time at Barbizon, Corot and Daubigny finding much of their inspiration elsewhere; yet they are ever associated with the group, and as such remain known particularly as the “Barbizon Painters,” the “Men of Thirty,” and even as members of the “Fontainebleau School.”

It is of these, then, that this book treats, these delightfully artistic souls, their intimacies, their struggles, their accomplishments, the stories of their lives, and some estimate of their present places in art. Often have they been exploited; much has been said of them; their names have become household words where pictures are talked about; yet the last word by no means has been uttered and, save in one instance, never before have they all been seriously considered in a single volume. It is from the painter's point of view that this book is written, the viewpoint of one who, as the French say, has "passed that way," who knows by practical experience something of the struggles and achievements, something of the difficulties that beset their paths; and, though any critical estimate is necessarily the attitude of but a single mind, it may happen that he who has gone through similar struggles, has worked along the same lines and made like experiments, may get at least as close to the men and their underlying motives and impulses, even if not a bit closer, than the critical layman.

I have used the word critical perhaps unwisely. The place of these men in art is assured, quite beyond any doubt. It is rather in an analytical way that I would proceed and so tell of their processes, their methods of attacking nature, with something of the influences that spurred them on, something of their environment and their attitude of mind, along, of course, with the story of their lives, their family circumstances, all of which was necessarily part of the final development.

One of the group, Corot, at least, has been the unfortunate victim of the imitator; for when small canvases sell for many thousands of dollars and these not over-difficult to reproduce, it is certain the unscrupulous will take advantage of the opportunity. Corot, it is estimated, in a very busy and active art life of over fifty years of painting, produced about eight thousand canvases. It has been stated that, in America alone, there are thirty thousand pictures which bear his signature! While this may be an exaggeration, it is certain there are many works scattered throughout the world

purporting to be by Corot, which he never saw. Diaz, Daubigny, and Dupré, too, likewise have been imitated frequently, and sometimes successfully. Millet, Rousseau, and Troyon, on the other hand, have generally defied the skill of the forger, their work having a certain personality, either of touch, colour, arrangement, or technique, that has baffled the imitator.

Much of the blame for this, however, rests on the lack of discrimination of the American patron, who so frequently, alas, buys only names and concerns himself little with the relative excellence of the work. Is it the fashion to have pictures by the Barbizon Men?—then the Barbizon Men the collector must have, regardless of the quality of their work, and so the name is there, no price is too large to pay for the canvas. But the Barbizon Men, like all other artists, were not always at concert pitch. They had their moments of inspiration, but there were other times when, being after all but human, they nodded. It is not with their failings, however, that we are concerned. At their best, most of them were artistic giants;

and since we have never outgrown the days of our absorbing interest in fairy tales, giants ever were profoundly interesting. So we may tell their simple stories wherein you shall not find much of excitement, only little of adventure, and none of wickedness. Theirs were lives of steady application, of devotion to their lovely occupation, where, as Robert Louis Stevenson says, "In the practise of their art they had more than their share of the rewards of life, since no other business offers a man his daily bread upon such joyful terms."

There is a good deal of literature extant about Millet and Corot. Millet himself left behind many letters to his friend Sensier, in which he laid bare his inmost thoughts; and Corot, too, wrote fluently; while there remain accounts of Diaz and Rousseau, though not very many, for, after all, there was little to record. Richard Muther, the German art historian, I have quoted extensively; and Sensier, in his *Life of Millet*, gives us the best insight into the little community at Barbizon, though, after all, life there was uneventful enough.

The romance of it all comes long after all the group have passed away, when their pictures, that so frequently went begging, now fetch sums the Barbizon Men never dreamed of in their wildest moments, never could possibly have hoped for. Indeed, it is difficult even now to believe such a success could have come to any group of painters after death. I casually look over two catalogues of sales in New York in 1913 and I find in them eight Barbizon canvases belonging to one collector, seventeen to another—twenty-five in all—that sold for just a little less than half a million dollars, which would be two and a half million francs; while in the spring of 1914, in London, fifteen Barbizon pictures brought one million francs!

When you read the accounts of these sales you rub your eyes to make sure you are not dreaming! A *Sunset* by Diaz at \$12,600. If he had got one hundred dollars for it originally, he would have been more than content. Some *Willows* by Daubigny fetch \$30,000, a sum to have kept him all his life. A landscape by

Rousseau for \$15,200,—you shall read later in these pages that Rousseau sold twenty-five canvases in May, 1861, at the Hotel Drouot in Paris, by auction, and received therefrom, after deducting charges, three thousand dollars. A Millet *Shepherdess* brings \$22,500. Millet, who needed bread to eat, and here we have one canvas bringing one hundred thousand francs! Had any one predicted this to Millet, that person would have seemed a fit candidate for an insane asylum. And what shall be said of Papa Corot, whose *Orpheus and Eurydice* sold in the McMillin sale in New York in 1913, for—no, this is not a misprint, it is cold fact—\$75,200! It was bought by a collector of Cleveland. Again, let us fancy the feelings of Corot had any one told him one of his paintings would be bought for three hundred and seventy-five thousand francs! More interesting even—what would his father have said, the careful, kindly parent who had taken his son's talent as such a family misfortune!

The curious part of it all is that these men, and there were eight of them, should have been

so uniformly able, each in his own way, yet all so strangely under a general influence that bound them as a group. Stranger still is the blind, unthinking craze of the collector who has made possible to flourish the art of the forger. Indeed, the Barbizon painting without full and complete documentary evidence is viewed with great suspicion to-day by the dealer. Its artistic excellence is a secondary matter to its provenance, for there must be every documentary proof. Unfortunately documentary proof is easier to furnish than artistic qualities, and so it happens that not all the collector obtains is pure gold. However, we have, just the same, a marvellous showing of the work of the Barbizon Men in America, where many of their masterpieces have found their way. It must be remembered, too, that through the intelligence of an American artist, William M. Hunt, many Barbizon pictures came to Boston in the early days.

ARTHUR HOEBER.

THE ENCLOSURE, Nutley, N. J.

January, 1915.

JEAN FRANÇOIS MILLET
1814–1875

THE BARBIZON PAINTERS

I

JEAN FRANÇOIS MILLET

I

THE name of Jean François Millet is indissolubly associated with the little town of Barbizon, is so part and parcel of its artistic history, and the man was so unique an art product, that it is eminently fitting he should receive first attention in any consideration of these "Men of Thirty" who composed the Barbizon school. He was essentially a real product of the soil, an integral part of the peasantry of the land; his sympathies with them, his viewpoint, his familiarity with their life, being reflected with rare intensity through all his work. His earnestness, enthusiasm, ap-

plication, and enormous sincerity have never been surpassed in the history of his profession and, like the rest of the group, he was devotion itself to his ideals and aims, never wavering for a moment, never allowing himself to be switched off the path leading directly to his ends. For they were all of them men with astonishing singleness of purpose, who made their art their very life and gave their every waking moment to it.

The official register of the modest hamlet of Gruchy, in the Department of the Manche, in France, gives the date of the birth of Millet as October 4, 1814. His father, Jean Louis Nicolas Millet, was a peasant proprietor of a small farm, which he cultivated only by unceasing, unremitting toil, and by which he supported a large family of children and relatives with respectability though in great poverty. All—women and children—laboured in the fields, Millet's mother among the rest, for the care of her children was entrusted to her husband's mother, who lived with them and, it is said, ruled the entire household with a rod of

iron. Nine children in all she bore Millet's father. The air of the home was one of deep religious devotion, austere, sombre, perhaps the last place wherein to inspire any feeling for art, and the melancholy of his environment never left Millet through the rest of his life but was reflected, with only rare exceptions, in every canvas he painted. Of ancient stock of the countryside, Millet's grandmother—born a Jumelin—had an overweening pride in her family. She spoke the ancient *patois*, wore the distinctive costume of the local peasantry, and above all was profoundly devoted to the Catholic religion, submitting all questions in which doubt arose in her mind to the village priest. Under this austere atmosphere, nevertheless, the embryo artist thrived, and came to young manhood with deep and abiding respect for this grandmother, who indeed must have been a remarkable character.

An uncle, Charles Millet, is said to have had a slight influence on the boy. A priest unfrocked by the Revolution, this uncle lay for hiding time in hiding in the Millet house,

where at moments he went into the fields and laboured with the rest in the tilling of the soil.

It was a strange, sad existence for the youthful Millet, and it made a sober, pessimistic man of him, though it never for a moment affected his great desire to be a painter, even while he toiled laboriously in the furrows, doing a man's work long before he had come to man's estate. And yet, despite the continuous duties of the farm, always the boy had found a spare moment between jobs in which to draw—drawing such as it was, with burnt sticks on a white wall, rarely with pencil on paper. He drew the people about him; and he made likenesses that all could recognise. These finally made such an impression that, when the lad was twenty, a family council was called to discuss the matter. Says the eminent German historian, Muther: "Millet stood before the world like the first man in the day of creation. Everything seemed new to him; he was charmed and astonished, and a wild flood of impressions burst in upon him. He did not come under the influence of any tradition, but approached art like the man



Courtesy Scott & Foulkes Co.

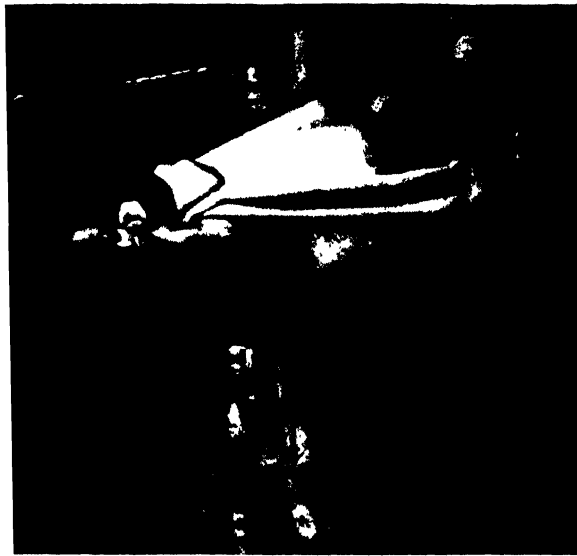
BOY AND DOG



Courtesy M. Knoedler & Co.

A WATER CARRIER

MILLET



Courtesy M. Knoedler & Co.

GARDEUSE DES MOUTONS

MILLET

in the age of stone who first scratched the outline of a mammoth on a piece of ivory, or like the primeval Greek who, according to the legend, invented painting by making a likeness of his beloved with a charred stick upon a wall."

Indeed, as has been said, Millet's first attempts were with a charred stick upon a wall! So it was that the father took some of the drawings to a certain M. Mouchel, in Cherbourg, a painter who had been a pupil of the famous David. Great was the master's excitement when he saw the work and instant was his counsel to the father to start the youth on an art career. The advice, however, meant renewed economy on a family already economising almost to the breaking-point. There is a world of pathos in the loving attitude of the poor father, who, when he saw the first serious drawing by his son, was quite overcome by what appeared to his untutored eyes a masterpiece. "My poor François," he is reported to have said, "I see well that thou tormentest thyself with this idea. I would gladly have sent thee to learn this profession of a painter, but I could

not, for thou art the eldest of my boys, and I had too much need of thee; but now the others are growing up, and I will not hinder thee from learning what thou hast so much desire to know." And thus it was that the trip to Cherbourg was made.

Up to the time of his departure for Cherbourg, there had been only a modest education, though it is said the priestly uncle had taught Millet some Latin. In the larger town, under Mouchel, where he is reported to have remained three years, Millet was set to copy some of the Old Masters in the local museum, and there he became acquainted with one Langlois de Chevreille, who had been a pupil of Baron Gros, the historical painter. But Langlois was more of a friend than a teacher; for the academic found little sympathy with Millet, who gained practically nothing from his instructors during his stay in Cherbourg. Never would Millet admit that he had learned anything from either of these men, or, for that matter, from any master, insisting that he was ever his own teacher: a position that must be admitted a strong

one, since Millet always went his own untrammelled way and was essentially his own, original self, from first to last. Indeed, it was just this insistent originality, this absolute ignoring of all traditions, this independence of convention, that stirred so many of his fellows to antagonism against his pictures, which the world was slow in comprehending, slower still in giving practical encouragement to, and even yet more deliberate in awarding a just meed of praise.

In 1835, Millet's father died and the son found himself, at twenty-one, the male head of the family. The designation "male head" is used advisedly, for the venerable and forceful grandmother yielded not one iota of her leadership and authority. When Millet half-heartedly attempted to assume control of the farm, she rose in her might. "My François," she declared, "we must bow to the will of God. Your father, my Jean Louis, said you should be a painter. Obey him and return to Cherbourg."

So it was that he went back to the art life in

that city and continued to make copies, always with the eye of these teachers upon him. He assisted Langlois in some religious pictures he was executing for Trinity Church at Cherbourg, work which attracted considerable attention to the youthful peasant-painter and which still may be seen, his share of the labours being distinctly recognisable.

In France they have a delightful way of looking after the artistic talents of their youths, a fashion unknown elsewhere, save perhaps, and to a less extent, in Italy. When a lad displays a marked tendency for painting or sculpture, the community sooner or later manages to raise a sum of money to send him to the capital, where he may attend the schools, perhaps eventually compete for the great prize of Rome, the aim of all young French students of art. On August 19, 1836, Millet being twenty-two, the friend and master, Langlois, wrote an appealing letter to the Mayor and the Municipal Council of Cherbourg. The burden of his epistle was that were they to countenance and support the young man, Jean François Millet,

who gave such great promise of an art career, they would endow the fatherland with one great man the more. Moved by this appeal, the Council unanimously voted Millet an annuity of four hundred francs (eighty dollars) a year—not a staggering sum, to be sure, but a little money in those days went a long way; and, to add to the student's joy, the Department of the Manche added six hundred francs more, bolstering the total up to two hundred dollars. With a slight addition of funds from home, Millet went up to Paris, where he arrived in January, 1837, proud, high-principled, very sensitive, extremely shy and awkward in his manner—a regular countryman, in short; but not a little cock-sure of himself, for he had met with considerable flattery in Cherbourg.

At twenty-three, therefore, we find Millet in the city of Paris, ready to pursue his art studies with greater seriousness than he had ever before shown; a great, splendid-looking Hercules, broad-chested, his hair falling in long, light locks over a handsome, determined face, his figure somewhat incongruous, quite remote

from the city types about him. He was unquestionably the peasant and could never be mistaken for anything else, a characteristic he maintained for the rest of his life. He entered the studio of Delaroche, where they nicknamed him *l'homme des bois*.

From the very first he was rebellious. The pictures of his master never made any appeal to him, and for the strict rules of the academic he had not the faintest use. In the studio he went his own way. It is said that, when his fellow students approached his easel, he turned his canvases away, and to their witticisms he retorted: "What does my painting matter to you? I don't trouble myself with your bread and grease." Here, as through the rest of his life, he was a solitary figure, going his own way, working out his problems quite by himself, having little in common with the men of his profession, yet knowing full well what he wanted to do and doing it always in his own original way. His master soon became out of patience with this truculent, awkward peasant pupil, who disclosed little facility, absolutely no clev-

erness, and declined to follow the tendencies which Delaroche approved. It was a day of academical compositions, classic or allegorical arrangements which meant nothing to Millet, and which he not only declined to attempt but which, on the contrary, filled him with loathing. For the Romantic or the Classic schools he had the utmost contempt. He left the studio presently—in 1837—having gained practically nothing, for he was painting in a manner entirely different from the rest of his fellows, in rather heavy, thick, awkward colour strokes, clumsily put on his canvas, meaning nothing to either his master or the students. Accounts of this stay in the studio of Delaroche differ, however, for according to some writers the master found a certain interest in the work of Millet and prevailed upon him to make an effort in the competition for the *Prix de Rome*. Delaroche also solicited him to assist on the famous hemicycle decoration now in the *École des Beaux Arts*. It is averred that Millet even went so far as to change his style somewhat to conform to academical requirements; but when the

award of the *Prix de Rome* was made to another student, he left the studio in great disgust.

In the meanwhile, Millet, though he had learned little in the studio, had found great consolation and profit in frequenting the Louvre, whither he went continually, day after day, lingering long before certain of the masters who appealed strongly to him. Before these, and alone with his thoughts, he worked out the problems that were confronting him; and, as the French writer Alexandre avers, Ribera, Zubarán and Velasquez must have been his real masters. Meanwhile Millet was unutterably lonely and solitary. He saw nobody, spoke to never a living soul, and his natural shyness became even greater than ever, while his longings to return to his own countryside grew almost irresistible. He suspected everybody of mockery of his manners and appearance. All this engendered suspicion, distrust, and there came disputes with lodging-house people; funds became so low that he was forced to go to a workman's boarding-house, where he spent his last few *sous* for food. Sickness followed, and a

friend came to his rescue, taking him away to the country, where he recovered.

Now followed a period of odds and ends of work to produce a livelihood. Illustrations, portraits, even signs, were made that brought the artist trifling sums; and[^] always his companions were books rather than his kind, for he was an omnivorous reader. He is said to have had a passion for Shakespeare, Scott, Byron, and he knew his Bible better than most men. He read much Latin as well. He was, however, distinctly not gregarious in his tastes and to the end remained a solitary man. He did, however, form a warm friendship in Paris with a fellow student named Louis-Alexandre Marolle, sharing a small studio with him in the *rue de l'Est*, number 13. There, when hard pressed for money, this youth, being something of a practical turn of mind, persuaded Millet to produce a number of pastels in imitation of Boucher and Watteau, drawings which brought occasionally as much as twenty francs, though about this time Millet was glad to paint portraits at almost any sum he could get, a dollar

occasionally being all he obtained. Marolle went about with Millet to the museums and the libraries, and where there was necessity for any speech, Millet, out of shyness, made his friend talk for him. Together they frequented the Library of St. Genevieve, where Millet pored over books on anatomy, particularly those by Dürer and da Vinci, and he read biographies, giving great attention to that of Michelangelo, whose works he studied always with enormous enthusiasm.

At the age of twenty-seven, Millet sent his first contributions to the Salon. These consisted of two portraits, one of which, of a relative, was admitted, though Millet insisted it was the poorer of the pair. It attracted no attention, and at the close of the exhibition the artist returned home to Normandy. The next year, 1841, residing it must be presumed then in Cherbourg, he married a young woman of that town who died three years later of consumption after a life with him of dire poverty, the woman being an invalid all of the time. A year later, he married a second time and by the second





THE BATHER
MILLET

Courtesy M. Knoedler & Co.

mate he had no less than fourteen children. The first wife was Pauline-Virginie Ono, and with her he lived for a while in cheap lodgings in Paris. Two portraits were sent to the Salon of 1842, but both were refused; nothing was sent in 1843; in 1844 two pastels were accepted. After his second marriage, in order to produce work that would find a market, he resorted to painting nudes. They were never for a moment suggestive, though they were naked women. Yet this peasant from Normandy could not be light, dainty, easy, charming. Said Diaz when he saw them: "Your women bathing come from the cow house." Which was literally true, for these nudes, too, were of the soil, elemental in their sturdiness and solidity.

It was the picture of *Women Bathing* that was destined to change the entire career of Millet. He was standing one day before the show window of the dealer Deforge, in Paris, where the canvas was displayed, when he overheard a bystander remark, "This is by Millet, who paints nothing but nude women." Inno-

cent and pure-minded, Millet was staggered by this talk, which implied an evil tendency in his work. At once he went to his wife, announcing his determination to abandon such pictures for the future; and she, although it involved additional struggle against poverty, acquiesced in his resolve. There came to him the memory of a speech his old grandmother had made at the home in Gruchy when she said: "Remember, my François, that thou art a Christian before thou art a painter, and put not so noble a profession to the service of the enemies of religion; do not offer sacrifice to immodesty. There have been, it is told, great saints who have done great works in painting; thou must imitate them."

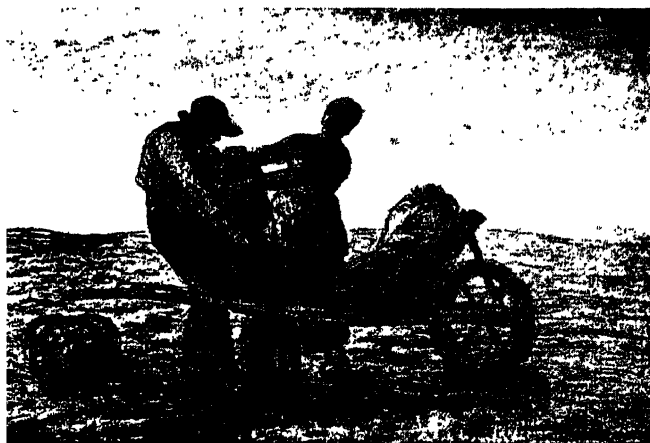
So it was that this stray remark of a stranger turned the entire thoughts of Millet in another and utterly different direction. From then on he gave himself up to themes of a more serious character.

The second wife was a Catherine Lemaire, also a native of Cherbourg. She was thoroughly in sympathy with his artistic aims



Courtesy Cottier & Co.

ŒDIPUS TAKEN FROM A TREE
MILLET



esey Cottier & Co.

THE POTATO HARVEST

MILIT



esey Cottier & Co.

THE DIGGERS

MILIT

and purposes and throughout all their vicissitudes she seemed never to have grumbled or lost heart, having been thus of enormous help to him. After a short stay in Havre after their marriage the couple went to Paris, where they settled in a modest apartment in the *rue Rochechouart*.

In 1846 Millet's picture, *St. Jerome Under Temptation*, was refused at the Salon. Later, this work was painted out, after his resolution to abandon the nude. The next year he sent his *Œdipe Taken from the Tree* to the exhibition, where it attracted the favorable attention of Théophile Gautier, who wrote of it at length; while other critics also favoured it.

Millet began to attract about him a circle of friends—not many, it is true, but loyal ones, among them his fellow-painter, Diaz, who warmly championed his cause and went about among his friends praising Millet's work, some of which he managed to sell. But these were trying days for the peasant-painter, who worked hard to make both ends meet. This year, too, the eldest son, François, came to the

couple. It was at this time that Millet made the now world-famous drawing of himself, a splendid, characteristic likeness, showing the sober young peasant face under the mass of wavy hair and full beard, with thoughtful eyes and serious countenance. The following season Millet was stricken with an attack of rheumatic fever and for a while it was thought he could not recover. With the great poverty into which the household was continually plunged at this time, as well as at others, his recovery was retarded by the absence of much that was absolutely necessary to his comfort, the necessary need of fresh linen being keenly felt, for example. And yet, on this occasion as in other instances, good friends somehow came to his rescue.

His first work after restoration to health was his large picture, the *Winnower*, a theme Millet painted no less than three times. This first one, however, went to America, probably through the artist, William M. Hunt, who was instrumental in introducing the work of Millet in the United States, and it was burned in the

great fire in Boston in 1872. This first *Win-
nower* canvas was sent to the Salon of 1848,
where it was sold for the sum of one hundred
dollars—an amount that stood him in good
stead at that time and gave him considerable
courage. The picture had been placed in a
position of honour at the exhibition, and one ac-
count maintains that it was purchased by the
Minister of the Interior, Ledru-Rollin; but it is
certain that the work came to the United States
later, and so, in the absence of detailed informa-
tion, it is more likely the canvas was bought by
Hunt. At any rate, it was the first important
departure in the direction of imposing render-
ings of the dignity of labour, of actual represen-
tation of the peasant working. A succession of
similar works was to follow; not many in all, if
the truth be said, for Millet was a slow crafts-
man who did not produce rapidly by any means,
his entire output of signed important canvases
being considerably under one hundred, though
it is true that he did an enormous amount of
drawings and pastels, many of them of large
importance.

About this time, the February Revolution of 1848 upsetting affairs of all kinds, Millet turned his attention to etching; and though he was without materials, or proper appliances of any sort, such as plates, a press, or even the ink with which to take impressions, not to mention funds with which to have a plate printer take proofs, he succeeded in producing most interesting results by using the back of an old plate, or such bits of metal as he could secure, and, with colour obtained from his palette, securing impressions by pressing the paper with the back of an old spoon. One of these early efforts he took to a publisher as the title-page for a popular song, only to have the door shut in his face! About this time, owing to pressing needs—for the Revolution was a source of great discomfort to the French artists, causing an absolute cessation of any buying of pictures—Millet considered himself fortunate in having a commission for the painting of a signboard for a midwife, thirty francs being the remuneration! On this sum the pair, with their baby, existed for fifteen days; and when

the political disturbance was over, Millet was again able to make some modest sales of his drawings and portraits. Like all patriotic citizens, Millet had to shoulder a gun and take his burdens with the rest; but he had no heart for combat. Such scenes made a wretched impression on his peaceful mind and he turned from them in loathing and horror. So it was that he made up his mind to quit the metropolis for the country, and to this end he and his friend, Charles Jacque, the animal painter, journeyed to Barbizon—not far from Paris, it is true, but it might well have been hundreds of miles away, so complete was the solitude, so absolute the change.

II

The coming of Millet and his family to Barbizon was a distinct event in every way and was the result of many unusual conditions. Despite the miseries and discouragements of the year 1848, one bit of good luck stood out from the general gloom and ill-fortune that pursued the painter. The Minister of the In-

terior, M. Ledru-Rollin, had given Millet a commission from the State. He had been urged so to do by the new Director of the Louvre, Jeanron, a man who was continually interesting himself in the struggles of promising artists; and so it was that there came an order from the Republic for a picture to be executed at the painter's leisure. At first Millet began a large canvas with figures the size of life, the theme being Hagar and Ishmael in the Desert. In vain all his artist friends counselled him not to render the figures so large, insisting that a smaller work would meet all the requirements. He continued with his labours, nevertheless, until he had carried the composition quite a long way. Hagar was seen lying on the ground clasping her child in her arms. Her bare limbs were shown, and these Millet had modelled with great care. Then—suddenly—came the incident of the remark of the stranger at the shop window and Millet's resolve never again to paint the nude.

The *Hagar and Ishmael* was immediately abandoned, and on the same canvas was begun

a picture of some haymakers resting in the shadow of a haystack. It was a memory of a scene in his old home. But Millet had difficulty in finding a model, though he searched about the outskirts of Paris. Still, he went on with the canvas, and the more he struggled with this picture, the more discontented he became with life in the great city. He maintained that the country was the only place for a man who found himself in sympathy with the class of work he desired to do. When he made this resolution known to his artist friends, they were unanimous against his leaving the city and burying himself in the country. Diaz in particular—a worldly soul, fond of the flesh-pots and of painting brilliant, joyous pictures—was the loudest in protesting against the change. He insisted that Millet would live with brutes and sleep on weeds and thistles if he went to the country and painted peasants; whereas, if he stayed in town and continued to do exquisite nudes, he would shortly be clothed in silks and satins and have all the comforts that money could purchase. Millet, however,

was adamant. "I know all that," he said; "but, all the same, I am more familiar with country life than with that of the city, and once I set my feet on grass, I shall be free."

That winter, while he continued to work intermittently on the *Haymakers*, Millet had greater cares and discouragements than ever. The troubled state of the capital, the great uncertainty that everywhere prevailed, made the disposal of pictures almost an impossibility; for they were the last things in which people cared to invest. To add to his responsibilities, a third child came to the household: a son, this time, who was called after the father. Millet was now forced to part with some exquisite drawings for a pair of boots; he gave a picture for a new bedstead; a tailor received several works for some new clothes; crayon sketches were sold for from twenty cents to a dollar each; anything and everything went that could help to raise a little ready cash. He did four portraits of his friends Diaz, Dupré, Barye, and Vechte, admirable pieces of work and excellent likenesses, which he let a dealer

have for twenty francs—four dollars. So excellent, too, were these portraits it is incomprehensible that the man could not have found a clientele in this direction. Indeed, Millet was reduced to so low an ebb that his friend Jacque discovered him one morning about to light the fire with a lot of sketches. These Jacque snatched from him and insisted upon purchasing for a few francs, though he could ill afford spending any money, for he was almost as destitute as was Millet.

In spite of all this grinding and galling poverty, Millet managed to work on and to complete his *Haymakers*, and in April, 1849, he notified the Minister of State that the canvas was at his disposition. The sum agreed upon for the work had been 1800 francs, of which 700 had been paid to him in advance. The picture was accepted by the official and one month later came a check for the remaining 1100 francs. Meanwhile, however, the cholera had broken out in Paris, raging with great violence in the quarter where Millet and his friend Jacque lived. As both had children,

they greatly feared its ravages. Jacque himself had been taken ill, and he had hardly recovered when the money came to Millet. There was no hesitation: Millet went to him at once, broke to him the good news and insisted that Jacque share with him his fortune and that both of them should go away to the country with their families where they would escape the disease and get out into the midst of nature.

Thus was the trip begun; though there was still some difficulty to be encountered before they should reach the little village of Barbizon. Jacque, accepting the proposal, told Millet he knew of a little town on the edge of the Forest of Fontainebleau, though for the life of him he could remember nothing of the name, save that it ended in a *zon*; yet he was sure, once they arrived at Fontainebleau, they could find this paradise. On the 13th of June, 1849, therefore, in a little diligence bound for Fontainebleau were crowded the combined families of Millet and Jacque. On their arrival they put up at a little inn called "The Blue Dial,"

where they remained for a few days. To stay in a hotel cost a sum of money that to Mme. Millet seemed the height of extravagance. It would never do, she told her husband. Immediate search must be made for that little village ending in *zon*. Setting forth through the forest, Millet and his friend finally came across a wood-cutter who personally conducted them to a path that led to the village, which they entered by the cowherd's gate. Near this cowgate to-day, set in a great boulder, is a bronze medallion of two portrait heads to the honour and glory of the two great artists whose names will be forever associated with the renown of that place—Millet and Rousseau.

Like all who came under the sway of Barbizon, the comrades were delighted with it and its possibilities for the painter. The next day they went back to get their respective families, whom they brought by diligence to the corner where the path to Barbizon branches off from the highroad to Chailly. There they all left the coach and walked through the woodland to the little village. They were a simple, pathetic

little group, suggesting anything but a pair of artists destined to be world-famous. Indeed, a villager mistook the party for a group of strolling players. A rain-storm having come up, Millet's wife, holding the baby, had thrown her skirt over its head to protect it, while a maid-servant followed with a great basket of provisions.

So they made their way to the little inn kept by old Père Ganne. There, about the table, were a number of artists, presided over by Diaz, he of the famous wooden leg, a long-time friend of Millet; and so the newcomers found a warm welcome, congenial society, and those simple requirements that make the painter feel at home. After the custom of Barbizon, they smoked a pipe of peace, and there arose a discussion as to what school Millet should enroll himself under, whether Classicists or Colourists, for the artistic coterie of the village was divided into two factions. Millet took the situation calmly, as was his wont. "If you have any doubts," he said, "put me in a place by myself." Some one of the group remarked that the



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THE END OF THE DAY
MILLET



THE HOUSE OF JEAN F. MILLET

stranger seemed powerful enough, in looks at least, to found a school that should bury them all. He spoke more sagely than he knew.

They remained two weeks at the inn and then, having found the place entirely to their tastes, looked about for permanent quarters. These, as far as Millet was concerned, proved to be a bedroom in a one-storied cottage in the west end of the town, the owner of which permitted the daily meal to be cooked at the only fireplace in the establishment and occasionally the use of one of the rooms in his frequent absence. Meanwhile, Millet rented a little garret across the street which he used as a studio.

As usual, Millet was not without his ever-present financial difficulties. He had left Paris for his intended holiday with considerable arrearage in the matter of rent, and he wrote to his friend Sensier, asking him to see the landlord and tell him that he should have great difficulty in paying the back account, adding naïvely, "if, indeed, I am *ever* able to manage it." The little holiday turned out to be a stay of a quarter of a century, for at

Barbizon Millet remained till death claimed him.

By the end of this summer Millet had engaged the little cottage that was to shelter him for the remainder of his days and was to become a historic dwelling, the Mecca of many an artistic pilgrimage. Whatever trouble was to come to him—and all his life was filled with cares and anxieties, with pressing debts and bitter disappointments—he was nevertheless to pass far happier days than he had known in Paris, since at least he was to be in sympathetic surroundings, with nature continuously in front of him; his models were to his taste, and his life was to be passed doing the things that so strongly appealed to him. And, too, he was near enough to Paris to run up to the metropolis occasionally—only thirty odd miles distant—whither he went at times with canvases under his arms, generally in a vain endeavour to sell them. As a rule, alas, he met only with rebuffs and chagrin, for, save until the very end, the public would have none of him, the dealers eyed him with suspicion, and such as did

care to invest gave him beggarly sums for work that is now priceless.

Barbizon, in the Department of Seine-et-Marne, lies thirty-four miles from Paris and is six miles from the town and palace of Fontainebleau. It is a little hamlet of the Commune of Chailly and has changed little since the old days. It consists of a single long street, on one side of which is the great Forest of Fontainebleau, on the other side a broad plain. There is said to have gathered there, between 1825 and 1860, at the old inn table, the largest group of men of creative power that has assembled anywhere since the Renaissance. Back in the old days, when people travelled by diligence, Chailly was the last relay station on the highroad from Paris to Fontainebleau, and Barbizon lay across the fields, about a mile away. Nothing ever happened there; and little does now, save for the arrival of the painters who still flock there in great numbers, attracted by the superb subjects in a landscape way. The artistic discovery of the place dates from 1824, when two painters came to Fon-

tainebleau to visit a friend who was director of the porcelain manufactory there. He was Jacob Petit, and they were Claude Aligny and Philippe Le Dieu. This trio of friends went one day on an exploring expedition in the forest, looking for themes to paint. As evening drew near they were no longer sure of their way and, meeting with a cowherd, they were told that they were in the gorge of Apremont, six miles from their starting point, but not very far from the little village of Barbizon. To Barbizon they were led by the peasant, and there they found temporary lodgings with one François Ganne, a tailor and a seller of wine. From him they obtained food and permission to sleep on the straw with his cattle, since his house contained but two chambers, one of which he occupied with his wife, the other being his shop. To see Barbizon the next day was to become delighted with the place and to discover its artistic possibilities; and so these painters insisted that Ganne should receive them as lodgers. This, being a thrifty soul, he did, moving out of his sleeping-room into his barn,

with his family. Returning to Paris later, these artists spread the news of their find and thither flocked many of their comrades. Shortly afterward, Ganne built a two-story hotel and on the north side of the building he constructed studios. The venture was a wonderful success, for the painters invaded the place, making a regular artistic colony such as one finds now in many parts of France but which then was a distinct novelty.

Life in Barbizon was truly bohemian at this time, where came so many men destined later to achieve the greatest distinction. Under J. L. Gérôme, the group decorated the panels of the dining-room; for this distinguished artist, who later was to become one of the academic leaders, spent some time at Barbizon. Finally, one of Ganne's daughters married the painter Eugène Cuvelier; and at the marriage feast, held in the barn, Millet, Rousseau, Corot, and Barye were among the chief guests, all of them contributing to the gaiety of the occasion. The last three came to the little village about 1830; and Corot was there only irregularly.

To Millet the place was a haven after his experiences of the great metropolis, where he never for a moment felt at home, and where he chafed under the restraints of convention and the confinement of crowded streets and houses, where he yearned constantly for the freedom of the open and the environment of simple peasant life such as he liked to paint. Much of the accounts of his life we must get from the Frenchman, Alfred Sensier, his historian and intimate friend, one who stood by him through thick and thin and who fought his battles valiantly, doing all that lay within his power to advance Millet's interests, artistic and financial. To him Millet opened his soul in letters and confidences, in close communion telling him his inmost thoughts, his hopes and his ambition. Sensier was the son of a Paris lawyer and an intimate friend of Dupré, Troyon, Barye, Rousseau, and Diaz as well. For a while he was *Chef des Bureau des Musées*, going from that position into the office of the Minister of the Interior, where he remained until he was retired on account of ill-health, in 1875. He was the

author of *Souvenirs of Théodore Rousseau* and of a study of Georges Michel, the landscape painter, so long neglected and misunderstood. He brought Millet's life up to 1864 only, passing away before he was able to complete the work, but it was finished from letters and documents he left behind by the famous French critic, Paul Mantz, and it has since been translated into English by Helena DeKay.

Strong and powerful as appeared the rugged build of Millet, he suffered all his life with violent headaches that interfered with his work to a large extent. We are told that in the morning the artist dug and planted, reaped and sowed, kept himself out in the open and led the life of a farmer; but in the afternoon he went to his studio—so called by courtesy, for it was a low, dark, cold room—and there he kept busy with his compositions, his schemes for pictures, painting much from memory of the things he had noted while out in the fields. When he worked too long in this chamber, he would have attacks of these headaches which not only had a depressing effect upon him but would inca-

pacitate him for work for weeks at a time. Realising their approach, he would endeavour to ward them off by long tramps about the country, wearing, it is related, sabots and an old red sailor's jacket. Full of enormous energy, he would outdistance all his comrades on the tramp. Thus he writes Sensier:

“I work like a gang of slaves; the day seems five months long. My wish to make a winter landscape has become a fixed idea. I want to do a sheep picture and have all sorts of projects in my head. If you could see how beautiful the forest is! I rush there at the end of the day, after my work, and I come back every time crushed. It is so calm, such a terrible grandeur, that I find myself really frightened. I don't know what those fellows, the trees, are saying to each other; they say something which we cannot understand, because we don't know their language, that is all. . . . Send 3 burnt sienna, 2 raw ditto, 3 Naple's yellow, 1 burnt Italian earth, 2 yellow ochre, 2 burnt umber, 1 bottle of raw oil.”

And here in Barbizon, the idea of the *Sower*, which had so long obsessed Millet, took concrete form. He knew the figure well from his experiences at the old farm in Normandy, but at Barbizon he studied men in action, observed them long and analytically, made many sketches from memory, and finally, in 1850, produced his first canvas of this subject. It did not come up to his standards; so he did another, using the same figure, which he traced upon a second canvas. This he sent to the Salon of that year and it attracted no little attention among the men of the younger school. The picture, happily, is owned in Boston, by Quincy A. Shaw, Esqre. Millet has painted no more characteristic canvas, nor one more successful. Thus Théophile Gautier wrote of it at the time:

“The night is coming, spreading its grey wings over the earth; the sower marches with rhythmic step, flinging the grain in the furrows; he is followed by a cloud of pecking birds; he is covered with dark rags, his head by a curious

cap. He is bony, swart and meagre, under this livery of poverty, yet it is life which his large hand sheds; he, who has nothing, pours upon the earth, with a superb gesture, the bread of the future. On the other side of the slope, a last ray of the sun shows a pair of oxen at the end of their furrow, strong and gentle companions of man, whose recompense will one day be the slaughter-house. This is the only light of the picture, which is bathed in shadow, and presents to the eye, under a cloudy sky, nothing but newly ploughed earth. Of all the peasants sent to the Salon this year, we much prefer *The Sower*. There is something great and of the grand style in this figure, with its violent gesture, its proud raggedness, which seems to be painted with the very earth that the sower is planting."

Often about this time Millet would run down to Paris with a canvas or two under his arm and make the rounds of the shops in an effort to dispose of them, and occasionally he would stop with his friend Diaz and finish the canvas in his

studio. In 1853 Millet sent three canvases to the Salon and the authorities gave him a medal of the second class. The pictures were *Ruth and Boaz*, *The Sheep-shearer*, and *The Shepherd*. All were purchased by Americans, the artist William M. Hunt securing the last two. It is interesting to note that *The Sower* was sold for three hundred francs—sixty dollars, and *The Sheep-shearer* was about to go for a modest colour bill, when Hunt stepped in, settled the account, and took it away.

In a talk to his pupils, in Boston, Hunt once said:

“Millet’s pictures have infinity beyond them. . . . When I came to know Millet, I took broader views of humanity, of the world, of life. His subjects were real people who had work to do. If he painted a haystack, it suggested life, animal as well as vegetable, the life of man. His fields were fields in which men and animals worked; where both laid down their lives; where the bones of the animals were ground up to nourish the soil, and the endless

turning of the wheel of existence went on. He was the greatest man in Europe. I give you his poetical side; but he was immense, tremendous—so great that few ever could get near him. He read only such things as would help him; knew Shakespeare and Homer by heart; and was like Abraham Lincoln in caring only for a few books. He loved *Hamlet*; I once found him laughing over *The Clouds* of Aristophanes. It was splendid to hear him read the Bible. *Now the famine was great throughout the land.* ‘What a beautiful description that is!’ he would say. ‘It could be expressed in no other way.’ And to hear him read from the Book of Ruth! He saw it all from a painter’s standpoint. He is the only man since the Bible was written who has expressed things in a Biblical way.”

Hunt says that the most expensive picture by Millet he ever bought was *The Sheep-shearer*, for which he gave him ninety dollars; but Millet never touched a penny of this money; he owed it all to a colour merchant, who had written that he must have either money



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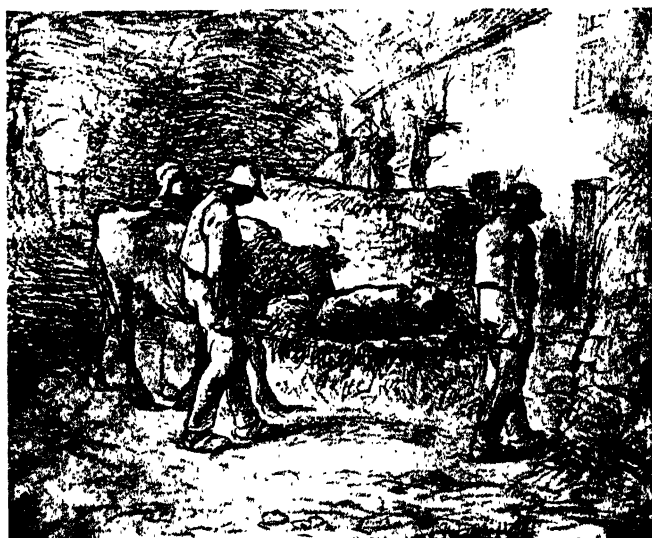
THE SHEPHERDESS
MILLET





Courtesy Cotter & Co.

THE FIRST STEPS MILLET



Courtesy Cotter & Co.

J.M.W. TURNER, 1812-1891

or a picture; and Hunt took the canvas and paid the bill. But Hunt was instrumental in selling many of Millet's canvases—not, it is true, for great sums, but at least for the price Millet demanded. Hunt maintained that the country people about Millet did not understand him very well, since he was somewhat high and dignified with them. Crossing the fields one day, Millet came upon some of the peasants who were cutting grain. One of them called out, "Ah, Monsieur Millet, this is very different from *your* work. I would like to see *you* take a sickle." Millet stopped and looked at him for a moment. Then he said, "Why *mon ami*, I'll take your sickle, and reap faster than you and all your family." And he did so, to the amazement of the crowd.

Meanwhile Millet seems always to have been in financial difficulties, since the prices he obtained were not really those of a skilled artisan. He wrote again to his friend Sensier, begging him to do something toward disposing of his work. "Try, my dear Sensier," he says in his letter, "to coin some money with my pictures;

sell them at any price, but send me one hundred francs, fifty, or even thirty." Think of it! Twenty, ten, even six dollars for pictures that now sell for as many thousands! It is unbelievable. Sensier trotted all over Paris offering dealers and amateurs the paintings of his friend, some of whom grinned, or sent him off as a madman, while others occasionally bought, but at laughable prices. Even when a sale was made at absurdly small figures, Sensier relates, it not infrequently happened that the work would be sent back with the words, "Decidedly, I don't care for this artist; I like anything else better." And so Sensier would take back the canvas, borrowing money to repay the sum he had sent to Millet, and keeping the picture, acquiring many in spite of himself by the force of circumstances. Happily, however, there came a day when Sensier was to realise on them. Times were to improve. A few amateurs began to view Millet's work favourably and to add to their collections some of his drawings. Then his friend and fellow artist Rousseau found him a patron, one Le-

trône, who bought several pictures, including the now famous *Woman Feeding Chickens*, for which he gave Millet the astonishing price of two thousand francs—a fortune then.

This was in 1854. So happy were Millet's circumstances now that this last sale of two thousand francs enabled the artist to take a long-desired trip back to his old home at Greville, where, though few of his immediate family remained, for death had called them one by one, Millet took a sentimental pleasure in making drawings of everything connected with his youth—the house, the barn, the orchards, the surrounding country—and thus he amassed a great quantity of material that was to serve him well later on.

The year 1855 was a fortunate one for Millet. It was the year of the completion of a now famous canvas, *A Peasant Grafting a Tree*, a theme inspired by his favourite poet, Virgil. It was a simple scene. One saw the man in his garden with his wife and child, thinking of the future of his children—working for his successors; and the picture was this time thor-

oughly understood. Once more Théophile Gautier gave him a critical appreciation, for thus he wrote:

“We begin our review of the country scenes by the picture of J. F. Millet, *A Peasant Grafting a Tree*. Very different from the ugly mannerists who, under the plea of realism, substitute hideousness for truth, M. Millet seeks and finds style in the representation of types and scenes of country life. His *Sower*, exhibited some years ago, had a rare grandeur and elevation, though its rusticity was not in the least softened; but the gesture with which the poor workman threw the sacred wheat into the furrow was so beautiful, that Triptolemus, guided by Ceres, on some Greek bas-relief, could not have had more majesty. An old felt hat, all rusty and faded, earth-stained rags, a coarse linen shirt, were his costume. The colour was subdued—austere even to melancholy; the execution, solid, thick, almost heavy, without any brilliancy of touch. Yet this picture made the impression as the begin-

ning of the *Mare au Diable* of George Sand—a profound and solemn melancholy. The *Peasant Grafting a Tree* is a composition of extreme simplicity, which does not draw the eye, but holds it long, once the attention is turned to it. The man seems to accomplish some mystic ceremony, and to be the obscure priest of a divinity of the country; his serious profile, with strong, pure lines, does not lack a sort of melancholy grace, though retaining entirely the peasant character; a dull colour, kept purposely low, wraps the scene and the figures like a thick rustic stuff. How strange is art! These two quiet figures on a grey ground, performing an ordinary work, occupy your mind and make you dream, while the most ingenious thoughts, carefully rendered, leave you as cold as ice. It is because M. Millet understands the hidden poetry of the fields; he loves the peasants whom he paints, and in their resigned faces expresses his sympathy with them; sowing, reaping, grafting, are to him holy acts having their own beauty and nobility. Why should not peasants have a style, like the hero?

Doubtless M. Millet has said this to himself, and he paints *Georgics* in which, under a heavy form and a sombre colour, glows a melancholy recollection of Virgil."

A lovely romance hovers about this picture, a chronicle of friendship sure enough between Millet and Rousseau. By this time the latter had become reasonably successful after his serious struggles against the academic opposition with which he had met so long. And so he announced to his friend Millet that he had found a purchaser for this canvas of the peasant grafting: an American, it appeared from Rousseau's account, who desired to remain unknown, but who gave Rousseau four thousand francs with which to buy the work. Millet, of course, was delighted, for the money was of the greatest assistance. Later, it was discovered that it was simply a question of Rousseau's coming to the aid of his friend. There was no American and it was Rousseau, out of his own pocket, who was the patron! Nor was it the first time that Rousseau had come to the rescue,

for the year before he had bought Millet's *Peasant Spreading Manure*, an admirable composition of a farmer in a great landscape.

More trouble, however, was to come to poor Millet, for his temporary financial successes had enabled him to meet only a few of the most pressing of his bills. Many unpaid accounts remained and these began to bear down on him. Early in 1856, other creditors started in to harass him and he found the bailiffs about him insisting on payment. Yet always he seems to have had devoted friends who came to his rescue and who did all in their power to dispose of his work. He writes again to his friend Sensier:

“Ah, the end of the month—where shall I find the money for it? For the children must eat. My heart is all black. If you knew how dark the future looks! At least, let me work to the end. I have a series of headaches which interrupt my work very often. I am very much behind-hand. Suppose I can't get done for the end of the month.”

Later he writes to his friend Rousseau:

“How I bore you, my poor Rousseau! You are a good proof that those whose hearts are kind live the life of victims. Do not think that I am unmindful of all the trouble I put you to; but I can’t help bothering you. I seem to be under a sort of spell—ah, I must stop. I cannot and I dare not say what I think on this subject. I am working like a slave to get my picture done [*The Gleaners*.] I am sure I don’t know what will come of all the pains I give myself. Some days I think this wretched picture has no sense. At any rate, I must have a month of quiet work on it. If only it is not too disgraceful! Headaches, big and little, have besieged me this month to such an extent that I have had scarcely a quarter of an hour at my painting-time. Physically and morally I am going downhill. You are right. Life is a sad thing, and few spots in it are places of refuge. We come to understand those who sigh for a place of refreshment, of light, and of peace. One understands that Dante makes



Courtesy Braun & Co.

GOING TO WORK
MILLET

some of his people say, speaking of the time that they passed on earth, '*the time of my debt*'! Well, let us hold out as long as we can."

And while Millet was thus suffering in mind and body, he was painting some of his greatest masterpieces, canvases that were to receive the homage of an entire world and to be sold for sums that would—any one of them—have maintained the artist in the greatest luxury all through his life of three score years; for *The Gleaners*, *The Angelus* and *Waiting* were products of this period.

In January of 1859, the year of *The Angelus*, Millet's embarrassments having increased to an alarming extent, the bailiff again at his doors, he wrote to Sensier:

"It is frightful to be stripped naked before such people: not so much for one's pride, which, of course, suffers, as because it is impossible to get what we need. We have wood for only one or two days, and we do not know how to get it, as they will not give it to us without money. Next month my wife will be confined,

and I have nothing. I am suffering and sad. Forgive me for telling you these things. I do not pretend to be more unfortunate than a lot of other people, but each feels his own pain. If you can stir up a little those who can get me an order, I will thank you more than ever. I will only believe it when I see you. I am working on the drawings of Alfred Feydeau, whose money I beg you to send me as soon as you get it, for the children cannot be without a fire. So much the worse for the end of the month."

In March of the same year, similar conditions prevailed; and later Millet found that one of his now famous pictures, *Death and the Woodcutter*, had been rejected at the Salon, an action that created a storm of disapproval among his adherents and in the world of art generally, for it was felt that great injustice had been done. So important and conservative a journal as the *Gazette des Beaux Arts* was most indignant. The well known Hedouin engraved the work.

Millet wrote:

“They wish to force me into their drawing-room art, to break my spirit. No, no! I was born a peasant and a peasant I will die. I say what I feel. I paint things as I see them, and I will hold my ground without retreating one sabot; if necessary, I will fight for honour.”

Still, the financial troubles would not down and again friends came to the rescue. This time it was Millet's fellow painter, Diaz, who managed to secure six hundred francs, which he brought to him as a loan.

About March, 1860, Millet signed a contract, according to Sensier, with a Paris merchant, to give him all the paintings and drawings he could do in three years. For this he was to have a thousand francs a month—a sum which at that time would seem to have been sufficient to have lifted all trouble and anxiety from his mind and left him quite free to do as he desired. In a way it was, save that at the end of the time he found himself indebted to his patron to the tune of nearly six thousand francs, a sum which he agreed to pay in pictures!

In 1861, Millet showed at the Salon three pictures, *The Sheep-shearer* being among them, as well as his *Waiting*. The *Sheep-shearer* had been sent the year before to the exhibition at Brussels, and this year it was much admired in Paris by the artists, though the critics attacked it. Millet himself was more or less indifferent and speculative as to the attitude of the writers for the press, as well as the general public, though there were times when he stopped for a little introspection. He wrote to Sensier:

“If I were not firm in my own ideas, if I had not some friends,—if I were alone, in fact—I should ask myself if I were not the dupe of my imagination, if I were not a dreamer. I ask you, what can I find good or serious, for the correction of my faults, in the invectives of my critics? I look in vain for anything but noise; not one counsel which I could use. Is this the office of criticism—merely to abuse?”

Millet, Sensier tells us, was taciturn, and when people tried to know him because he was an eccentric and tried to make him talk, they only succeeded in obtaining a few words of cold civility, though he was confident and communicative among friends. When he walked through the forest, which Sensier says had the power of making him forget his enemies, he became eloquent to an unusual degree.

It was in 1862 that he completed his now famous *Man with the Hoe*, a picture that had the critics and the public by the ears, for it was sadly misunderstood. Indeed, it would never have been hung save that Millet, by virtue of his second medal at the Salon, was no longer obliged to submit his work to a jury. Of all the paintings by Millet, this apotheosis to labour, this *Man with the Hoe*, was the most uncompromisingly realistic, brutal it has been called, certainly reeking of the sweat and hopelessness of the peasant life, as relentless as a Greek tragedy. It raised a storm of disapproval and censure from those, too, who hitherto had stood by the artist. Théophile Gau-

tier, for instance, became positively ferocious. It was of this work that Gérôme, the painter, once said in the presence of the writer, "the figure looked like a monkey dressed up in a man's clothes." One recalls a letter Millet had written to Sensier many years before, apropos of peasant life. He said:

"The most joyful thing I know, is the peace, the silence, that one enjoys in the woods, or on the tilled lands. One sees a poor, heavily-laden creature with a bundle of faggots advancing from a narrow path in the fields. The manner in which this figure comes suddenly before one is a momentary reminder of the fundamental condition of human life—toil. On the tilled land around one watches figures hoeing and digging. One sees how this or that one rises and wipes away the sweat with the back of his hand. 'In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread.' Is that merry, enlivening work, as some people would like to persuade us? And yet it is here that I find the true humanity, the great poetry."

Much upset by all the talk and discussion, by these attacks and the unsatisfactory prominence into which it had placed his name, Millet sought refuge in his little studio at Barbizon, where he gave himself up to long and lonely meditation. Finally he would join his family, saying, "There lies the truth. Let us fight for it." So he wrote to Sensier, as always, when he was in any sort of trouble:

"The gossip about my *Man with the Hoe* seems to me all very strange and I am obliged to you for letting me know it, as it furnishes me with another opportunity to wonder at the ideas which people attribute to me. In what club have my critics ever met me? Socialist? Why, I might answer, like the Auvergnat *commissionaires*: 'They say I'm a Saint-Simonist. It isn't true! I don't know what a "Saint-Simonist" is.' Is it impossible to admit that one can have some sort of an idea in seeing a man devoted to gaining his bread by the sweat of his brow? Some tell me that I deny the charms of the country. I find much

more than charms—I find infinite glories. I see, as well as they do, the little flowers of which Christ said that Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. I see the halos of dandelions, and the sun, also, which spreads out beyond the world its glory in the clouds. But I see as well, in the plain, the steaming horses at work, and in a rocky place a man, all worn out, whose ‘Han’ has been heard since morning, and who tries to straighten himself a moment and breathe. The drama is surrounded by beauty. It is not my invention. This ‘cry of the ground’ has been heard long ago. My critics are men of taste and education, but I cannot put myself in their shoes, and, as I have never seen anything but fields since I was born, I try to say as best I can what I saw and felt when I was at work. Those who want to do better have, I am sure, full chance.”

However, Millet had his great admirers among the gentlemen of the press and many of these gave him full recognition, even unstinted

praise. In 1864 he had plenty of publicity of both sorts, for and against his art. That year he sent two works to the Salon, a *Shepherdess*, and a composition of some peasants bringing home a calf born in the fields. The latter was the theme of many caricatures, coarse jokes, and adverse criticisms, but the *Shepherdess* made an instant success. The Director of the *Beaux Arts* offered Millet 1500 francs for the work, but it already had been sold for 2000 francs. It brought forth an article by Castagnary, one of the leading critics, who said:

“Let us first salute M. Millet. He is a master and his *Shepherdess* is a masterpiece. To the right and left in the background the plain stretches away and on every side passes beyond the limits of the frame. The shepherdess walks along, knitting; her flock follow her. . . . If you judge the worth of a work by the depth of feeling which it excites in you, this humble idyl must be considered as one of the most important pictures of the

Salon. The great artist has put his whole heart into it, his whole soul. Those who accuse him of wilfully exaggerating the ugliness of our peasants will be satisfied this time. The young shepherdess has all the beauty and all the rustic grace compatible with her condition and race. This is an important detail; but what we must look at especially, and praise without reserve, is the harmony, the intimate union, of all the parts of this beautiful landscape; the sheep are at home on the plain, the shepherdess belongs to them as much as they to her. The earth and the sky, the scene and the actors, all answer one another, all hold together—belong together. The unity is so perfect, and the unity resulting from it is so true, that the eye does not ask how the thing has been done. The handicraft disappears. The mind is entirely satisfied with the charm of the picture. Is not this the height of art?"

Not all the artists, though, appreciated Millet. Corot, who liked him, but never understood his talent, frankly said: "His pictures

are a new world to me. I don't know where I am; I am too fond of the old. I see there is great knowledge, style, depth—but it frightens me. I like my own little music better. And, to tell the truth, I find it very difficult to like new art. It is only lately, and after having been unsympathetic for a great while, that I at last understood Eugène Delacroix, whom I now think a great man.” Millet, on his part, thought Corot's pictures beautiful, but maintained that they showed nothing new.

So life went on with Millet, his headaches giving him considerable trouble and concern, and he had much family sickness. In 1867, the year of the Universal Exposition, his friends saw to it that there were brought together for that display a proper collection of his pictures, which were pretty well scattered about France. His showing made a distinct impression, but brought him no official honours.

This year he received a severe blow in the death of his friend, the painter Rousseau; and his own health became so uncertain that he

sent nothing to the Salon of 1868. In spite of this, however, he was remembered, for he was made a Chevalier of the Legion of Honour; grudgingly, to be sure, for it had taken the State seventeen years to find out that Millet was a master. The distribution of these honours was made in the *grande salon* of the Louvre, it seems, and when Millet's name came there was such an outburst of applause that the Minister of Fine Arts, who presided at the ceremony, became speechless and was greatly troubled. Millet, however, accepted his triumph calmly, and with modesty, continuing to work in silence.

The advent of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 drove Millet to Cherbourg, but the conflict over, he returned to Barbizon, never to leave it again for any length of time. Happily, he was no longer to know the wretchedness of poverty; for orders came to him now, patrons appeared with great frequency; he received higher prices and he was taken seriously on all sides. Dealers asked for his work and, in a material way, the world went well with him.

But he was not to be happy, for now his health became more seriously affected than ever before; he worked but little and with the greatest difficulty. "I groan," he writes Sensier, "more than I work." And again, "My eyes are very painful. I work very little, which distresses me." Once more, to Sensier, in September, 1873, "Since I saw you, I have suffered greatly. My cough kills me . . . I am breaking down completely, I assure you." Finally, in 1874, Millet, who wrote so easily and so frequently to his friend Sensier, found it a difficult task. Under date of March 4, in this year, his last letter to his friend is sent. These are his pathetic words: "How long it is since I have written you, my dear Sensier I am in such a weak state of health that I put off from day to day what I have to do. Believe me, I think of you, all the same. If my body is weakened, my heart is not colder."

And all this time, when breaking health prevented him from working, though every possible incentive was there to spur him on, he saw his pictures resold at staggering prices.

During his lifetime he was to learn of the sale of his *Angelus* for ten thousand dollars—fifty thousand francs. Six months before his death, the administration of the *Beaux Arts*, with a desire to repair the long forgetfulness of the past, signed an order allowing Millet fifty thousand francs for the execution of a series of decorative paintings for the Chapel of St. Genevieve. Delighted, yet appalled, he began to scheme out compositions for this fine commission; but death stayed his hand. In December, 1874, he took to bed, never to leave it alive, and on the 20th of January, 1875, he breathed his last.

Two other American artists in addition to William M. Hunt knew Millet and have written their impressions of the great painter. They are the late Wyatt Eaton and Will H. Low. The first saw much of him and under the most agreeable circumstances, for though Eaton was but a student, painting away in the little village of Barbizon, Millet appears to have taken a fancy to the youthful American and to have been much more friendly and com-

municative than he usually was to strangers. Eaton was a friend of Millet's son, François, who took him to his father's studio, where he was cordially received. Eaton describes Millet in no way affecting the peasant dress as so many writers have averred. It is true that he wore sabots; but then, in those days—and later too, for that matter—sabots were a necessity in a French country village when the weather was bad; and thirty years ago, in the artistic little colonies where the painters congregated, most of the artists availed themselves of the warmth and dryness of these wooden shoes, the roads being bad and the mud making leather shoes—even boots—almost impossible. Millet, says Eaton, had a voice that was clear and firm, rather low in pitch, but by no means of that deep bass or sonorous quality one might have expected from so massive a physique. When the young American saw Millet striding across the fields in the early evening, in his sabots and short cloak, he thought him as grand a figure as his own *Sower*. Eaton frequently played dominoes with him of an

evening, and often they sat up late when the game was over. Then would the master talk in wonderfully concise and well chosen language, for he always took pains to find just the right words to express his thoughts.

Low was in Barbizon with Eaton. They shared rooms, and a studio, though Eaton had come to the village some time before Low's arrival. Low, too, was introduced into the studio by Millet's son, François. He was pleasantly received and tells how Millet showed him his wonderful picture called *Spring*, now in the Louvre, a beautiful landscape which the American says conveyed to him the impression of looking at nature, not at a painted canvas.

Millet had then in his studio many canvases in various stages of progress, for it was his habit to begin many things to be laid aside as his interest waned and taken up again and completed when the mood seized him. Never did he work from a model posing; instead, it was his habit to indicate a composition lightly in charcoal, seldom at that time having recourse to nature. When he drew from life, it was in



Louvre Gallery

SPRING

MILLET





Courtesy Reinhardt Gallery

THE SHEPHERDESS
MILET



Courtesy Reinhardt Gallery

SUPPERTINE
MILET

strongly accentuated outline. The composition being arranged to Millet's taste, he drew in the figures and principal lines with ink, using a quill pen. Upon this with semi-transparent colour he would prepare the principal tones of his picture and set the canvas aside to dry, later going at it in opaque tones.

In the month of May following Millet's death, and after the State had given his widow a pension of 1200 francs a year, the unfinished pictures, drawings, and pastels that were in his studio were sold at auction, at the Hotel Drouot, in Paris, where they brought the considerable sum of 321,034 francs, or roughly about \$65,000, enabling Mme. Millet to discharge all her husband's obligations and still retain a comfortable income. And then prices for Millet's work began to advance, not gradually, but by leaps and bounds. Proofs of his etchings that he had offered for half a franc early in his career, sold for five, six, seven hundred—even a thousand francs. His *Angelus*, hawked about when it was painted in 1859, brought 200,000 francs. During the war of

1870, Durand-Ruel, the dealer, had this canvas in a picture shop in London where it was offered for \$5000. Later, a great American multi-millionaire offered \$100,000 for the work. In July, 1889, at the Secretan sale, in Paris, *The Angelus* brought 553,000 francs. Finally it again changed hands, when it was bought by the famous proprietor of the *Magazine de Louvre*, M. Chauchard, for 800,000 francs, or \$160,000!

In 1887 the first public recognition of the genius of the great Millet took place in the shape of an exhibition of his collected work at the *École des Beaux Arts*, when all Paris flocked to see the once despised pictures, though unfortunately many were missing. From the proceeds of this display, for which a modest admission fee had been charged, enough was set aside to erect a statue of the painter on the market-place at Cherbourg. In 1885, however, his fellow artists had erected at Barbizon a great monument of stone, containing a bronze plaque, with profile portraits of Millet and Rousseau, designed by the sculptor Chapu. It

was placed at the cowherd's gate by which Millet had first entered the little village.

III

Millet must be accounted a solitary man. In his two score of years at his easel he went his way quite alone. It is the common lot of great men in all the professions, but more so in art than elsewhere. That he was misunderstood, even reviled, fortunately had not the slightest effect on either the man or his art. His early years, says a German historian, were passed in a time when art, still blind to the life around, could find no subjects worthy of it except in the past and in the distance, and then he came forward and painted with profound simplicity the people at work in the fields, or in their distress, without sentimentality, and without beautifying or idealising them. , That great utterance, "I work,"—the utterance of the nineteenth century—was spoken for the first time. What others did later was merely to advance on the path opened by Millet. With the years his fame increases, his master qualities are

brought into greater prominence. Indeed, it is difficult, in the light of the present day, quite to understand the indifference with which his work was received. It is so simple, so direct, so eminently honest and straightforward, and so full of splendid intention, that one is lost in the endeavour to comprehend the opposition. The man was never a colourist in the full sense of the word, though occasionally he rose to great heights in his beautiful arrangement of pigment. Take such a canvas as his *Spring*, now in the Louvre, and you shall search far to find a more really beautiful combination of nature's colouring, where all the sentiment has been secured, the poetry, the harmony. It is a lyric note of the highest quality. As a rule, however, Millet's note was one of deep pathos, even sadness, and his tones were inclined to be sombre.

A revolutionary tendency has been imputed to him, some relation with the social and political movement of ideas in the forties. Nothing could be farther from his intentions. Indeed, during his whole life he repudiated the

designs which some of the democratic party imputed to him, as well as the conclusions which they drew from his work. In his case the art and the man were absolutely intermingled. He could, we perceive, have been no other than what he was, his birth, training, environment, all tending to shape the course he followed so consistently. Whatever he did was the outcome of his own unassisted self. No one may be said to have influenced him—no one, that is, save a few of the great masters whose consistent course disclosed to him the value of directness and simplicity, of adherence to high ideals. There have been far better craftsmen than Millet, who frequently fumbled in his work, whose colour at times was clumsy and heavy, whose technique often left much to be desired, was not infrequently brutal and hard, occasionally indecisive. Some one has said he made his appeal as a poet, *not* as a painter. Few of his pictures gave genuine æsthetic pleasure to the eye. We speak of his work in oils, for all the painter qualities lacking in this medium were realised to the full in his pastels. There he

left absolutely nothing to be desired. And yet it is probably just this quality of heaviness that counted in the final analysis of his renderings of peasant life, that made his men and women of the soil so convincing, made them so realistic and so appealing as apostles of work. His drawings, entirely removed from all rules of the academic, were simply delightful and complete, though never for an instant suggesting cleverness or lightness. One feels that when he drew a peasant it was not any particular peasant, but some one who stood for the general type of the peasantry of France. We are obliged to admit his preconception, yet to accept gratefully his interpretation. Is it his *Shepherdess*, or his woman in *The Angelus*, the man in this canvas, or his *Sower*, they are substantially the same man and the same woman, almost manikins; yet they stand for his conception of the French country man and woman in the fields, and they convince you just the same. They have virility, humanity; they belong just where he has placed them. You never have any doubt as to what they are do-

ing. Never is there any suspicion of the model posed, or the manufactured composition. Nor, on the other hand, is there any idea of photographic arrangement. They belong there; the painter seems to have passed that way and to have surprised them at their work. His gleaners will rise presently—theirs is not arrested motion, the labourer grafting his tree will presently look up and say a word to his *bonne femme*, perhaps kiss the baby, and the trio will wander into the thatched house, where there will be a bowl of soup for the evening meal. It is all realism, realistic, but not the realism of the snapshot. The circumstances of the group arriving at the situation are felt as well as are subsequent conditions. Above everything you feel the painter to be in entire sympathy with all the themes he painted.

In his *Maîtres d'autrefois*, the painter Fromentin speaks of Millet as “an entirely original painter, high-minded and genuinely rustic in nature, who has expressed things about the country and its inhabitants, about their toil, their melancholy, and the nobleness of their

labour. He has represented them in a somewhat barbaric fashion, in a manner to which his ideas gave a more expressive force than his hand possessed. The world has been grateful for his intentions; it has recognised in his methods something of the sensibility of a Burns who was a little awkward in expression. . . . He stands out as a deep thinker."

He *was* a deep thinker, in the best sense of the word, and a philosopher as well, who was continually engaged with serious thoughts about his art—about humanity. The American painter, Joseph De Camp, once said, "No work of art ever happens." There was never any accidental achievement by Millet. Serious and thoughtful, taking his profession almost with reverence, a picture to him meant agony and bloody sweat. "Nothing," he writes his friend Sensier, "counts except what is fundamental. The manner in which a work is conceived is the great thing and everything else must follow the same lines. The same atmosphere must pervade the whole. The environment may be of one character or another: but

whichever aspect of the scene you choose must remain supreme. We should be accustomed to receive our impressions direct from nature, whatever their kind, and whatever our own temperament may be. We should be steeped in her, saturated with her, and careful to think only the thoughts she inspires. She is rich enough to inspire us all. And where should we turn but to the one true source?"

Millet's art, it will be seen, was a religion with him, and his philosophy regarding it was profound.

"It is only," he continues, "an immense pride, or an equally immense folly, which makes people think they can rectify the supposed faults and bad taste of nature. What authority have they for this presumption? It is easy to see that; with men who can neither love nor understand her beauties, nature hides her face and retires into her shell. At best she can only meet them on terms of restraint and reserve. And so they say the grapes are sour. Since we cannot understand nature, let us slander her by way of revenge. The words of the

prophet might be applied to them. 'God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.' Nature gives herself without reserve to all who come to inquire of her. But she is a jealous mistress and must be loved alone. If we love works of art, it is because they come from her. All the rest is pedantry and emptiness.

"We can start from any point to reach the sublime, and everything is proper to be expressed, if only your aim is high enough. Then what you love with the greatest power and passion becomes the ideal of beauty which you impose upon others. Let each of us have his own. A profound impression will always find out a way of expression, and naturally seeks how to declare itself in the most forcible manner. The whole of nature's arsenal has been at the disposal of men of might, and their genius has made them employ, not what we may think the most beautiful things, but the most suitable. Has not everything in creation its own place and hour? Who would venture to say that a potato is inferior to a pomegranate? Deca-

dence set in from the moment that Art, which was in point of fact the child of Nature, became the supreme goal, and men took some great artist for their model, forgetting that his eyes had been fixed on the infinite. They talked of working from nature, when they approached her in a conventional form. If, for instance, they wished to paint an open air subject, they copied the model indoors, without reflecting that the light of the *atelier* had little in common with the all-pervading light of open day. Artists would never have been so easily satisfied had they been moved by a really deep motion. For since what is infinite can only be expressed by a faithful record of actual fact, this falsehood nullified all their efforts. There can be no isolated truth. From the moment that technical merits were made the first object of painting, one thing became clear: any one who had acquired considerable anatomical knowledge tried to bring this side of his art forward and was loudly praised. No one reflected that these admirable qualities ought to have been used like everything else, to express ideas.

Instead of trying to express definite thoughts, the successful artist drew up his programme and chose subjects which afforded opportunities for the display of his own skilful handicraft. And instead of using knowledge as the handmaid of thought, thought itself was stifled under a brilliant display of fireworks. One artist copied another and the fashion became general. But want of practise and skill in writing makes my language obscure—so try to discover what I want to say, without making use of my actual words. What I meant to say has not been sufficiently considered, and I have left a good deal unsaid.”

In the same letter he writes: “We try to make the productions of a few masters the type and pattern of all future art. Men of genius are, as it were, endowed with a divining-rod. Some discover one thing in nature, some another; according to their temperament. But once the treasure is dug up and carried off, it is absurd to see how others come and scratch in the same spot. . . . The mission of men of genius is to reveal that portion of nature’s riches

which they have discovered to those who have never suspected their existence."

These are, it will be seen, the words of a deeply thoughtful, philosophical mind, the mind of a man whose serious purpose in life could never for a moment be misunderstood. So frequently alone with his thoughts, Millet was much of the time given to introspection. Notwithstanding the fact that Mme. Millet made him a splendid helpmeet and presided over his household with love and dignity, it is scarcely conceivable that she rose to his intellectual heights, or furnished him with the mental comradeship his soul craved, even demanded; he was of necessity, therefore, thrown largely on his own resources. Yet it is obvious that Mme. Millet made him as happy as perhaps any woman could have made him, and for her he had great respect, admiration, and affection. But he was essentially a man's man. The deep sentiment in his nature found its outlet in his paintings, rather than in any other outward manifestation. There was nothing of that light outlook on life and love

that has characterised so many of the artists with their Bohemian tendencies. When Millet first made his way to Paris, the wife of the man in whose house he lodged made violent love to him, but he saw it not: other things concerned him more deeply. It was the story of Joseph and the wife of Potiphar over again, but Millet was apparently quite oblivious to the admiration he had inspired by reason of his vigorous physique and his superb, manly figure.

It seems quite impossible to associate the personality of Millet with anything remotely frivolous. He seems essentially a sort of Homeric figure, with his head always in the clouds; although he was thoroughly human in many small ways and had his quarrels like the rest of mankind. Yet when it came to his art, he was immediately transformed.

In the home of one of the most discriminating of our collectors, in a habitation full of every luxury and with beautiful nature on all sides, I saw one of the greatest canvases—*Dawn*—quite the most attractive of all the

works I have ever seen by Millet. It was a bit of painting so straightforward, so sincere, so able, and so entirely human, that one might never for a moment mistake the splendid genius of the artist. It was one of those inspirations that come to some favoured painters, and it filled me with enthusiasm by reason of its remarkable sincerity, for it bore in every touch evidence of the direct call to paint. In truth, few men in the history of art had so unmistakable a summons. Millet was an artist to the very core of his being; his art was his very life.

JEAN BAPTISTE CAMILLE COROT
1796–1875

II

JEAN BAPTISTE CAMILLE COROT

PERHAPS the best known, certainly enjoying the greatest popularity, of all the artists of the Barbizon group, Corot has least claim of any of them to be associated with that small French village where he spent comparatively little time, though he was one of the early comers, making his appearance there in 1830 among the first of the painter-discoverers of the place. His story is a very simple one. Few things happened to him. He was the hero of no romances or tragedies, and he had—unlike the rest—none of the bitter struggles with grinding poverty. It is true he waited long for recognition and honours; but they made little difference to him one way or the other. With money enough to follow his bent, with very modest desires, with an abiding, all-absorbing love of his profession, nothing mattered to him in the slightest

degree if he was permitted to sit at his easel out of doors, or in his studio. As this privilege was never denied him from early manhood, he went his way serenely, cheerfully, spreading happiness in his wake; for, no matter where he happened to find himself, he was like a ray of sunshine, fairly exuding encouragement, cheer, and optimism. He lived to be nearly four score, and the seventy-nine years brought him nothing but happiness and content, both of which, whenever it was possible, he passed on to his friends, and even to such mere acquaintances as he happened to find about him. He died profoundly regretted by all with whom he had come in contact through this long and honourable career. His story, simple though it is, is one of great achievement and profound interest, of duty performed, of filial devotion to father, mother, and sister. It is the tale of a simple, delightful nature, all smiles and joyfulness, the record of one of the most lovable men the world has produced.

Corot had no artistic ancestry—unless it be

that he inherited from his dressmaking mother a notion of harmony and taste. Hers was a much-frequented shop on the corner of the *rue de Bac* and the *Quai d'Orsay*, opposite the *Pont Royal*, a century and more ago. Her husband was a bookkeeper, and between the pair they made a very respectable income. There, the artist son, Jean Baptiste Camille Corot, was born on July 28, 1796. The profession of hair-dresser also was followed by the father of Corot; and later, when the mother, attracting the attention of the court, found her business increasing, Corot senior bent all his energies assisting his wife and attending to the management of her business interests.

At sixteen the lad, Camille, was through with his schooling and ready to be launched on a business career—ready, that is, so far as the family was concerned, for he turned out to be as poor a business man as he was a capable artist. He was sent to a dealer in fancy goods, then to a cloth merchant; but with both he was a signal failure, spending all his odd moments painting, to the consternation of the

family. When he was twenty-six, his parents assembled for a solemn conclave. It was determined, since there seemed nothing else to do, to permit the young man to take up the profession of the fine arts. To this end he was to be allowed, yearly, the sum of fifteen hundred francs. It must, however, be recalled that fifteen hundred francs at that time had a purchasing power of more than twice as much as it would have to-day. At any rate, the young man accepted this as a fortune, and with great delight. It is related that he was so dazed with the happiness of the prospect of doing what he had for so long dearly desired, that for a while he walked the streets day after day, unable to settle down to any work at all.

At first, Corot entered the studio of the painter Achille Michallon and later went with Victor Bertin. From neither did he gather much of anything, finding rather his inspiration before nature, in front of which ever after he worked faithfully and with loving enthusiasm. It is certain that Corot gained little



PORTRAIT OF COROT



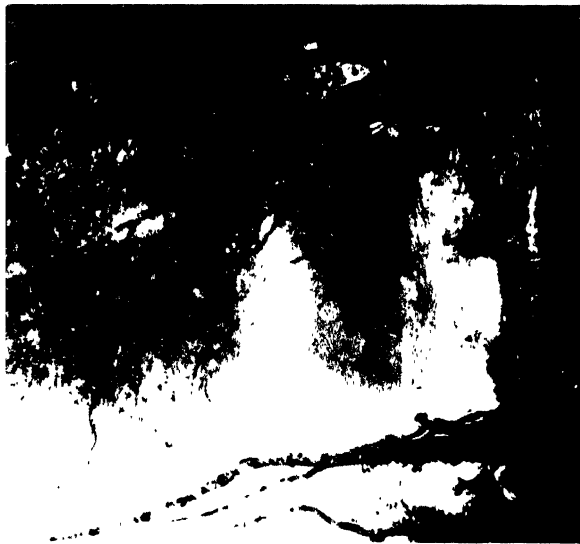
UPRIGHT LANDSCAPE



Courtesy Reinhardt Gallery

NEAR FONTAINEBLEU

COROT



Collection J. J. Hill, Esq

BY THE POND

COROT

from his friend Michallon, for the latter died in 1822, the year Corot quit commerce to become a professional painter. We are told, however, that Michallon dearly loved the Forest of Fontainebleau, and it may be that, in their conversations, it was he who pictured to Corot the beauties of that place.

Corot began his studies, however, along the river Seine, keeping his first sketch of that stream in his studio all his life. It was a view under the *Quai*, near the *Pont Royal*. Shortly afterward Corot's father bought a place at Ville d'Avray about four miles from Paris and here Corot found inspiration practically for the rest of his life. A beautiful pond there has figured in many of his compositions, while there were many willow trees and much simple pastoral beauty of the sort that appealed to this artist. Here Corot took the greatest pleasure in wandering about, in making notes, and in contemplation. It is said that night after night he would walk in the open and saturate himself with the effects of moonlight, of the evening, or, haunting the place at dawn,

he would watch the approach of day with the marvellous sky effects, until he became familiar with every phase of nature. The mists of this lake, the tender tints and the delicacy all figure in many a canvas, having been caught with rare poetry and truth.

Somewhere about 1825, Corot managed to get to Italy, assisted doubtless by the parental purse, for it is not on record that he was selling his work as early as this—to any great extent, at least—though he had already developed a talent that made his fellows take him seriously: that is to say, such of the men as were not steeped in the classical. In Italy, Corot gave himself over to the careful study of forms, to close searchings and serious drawings. He introduced many architectural bits in his pictures and he made the acquaintance of the group of young Frenchmen who were studying in Rome at that time, then considered highly necessary for the proper completion of an art education. There was of course there the group of *Prix de Rome* men, and Corot had gone to Italy with his friend Bertin. In Rome

he drew, as has been said, with almost classical severity, after the manner of the times. This, happily, was to be for his own good, for one feels all through the man's work this severe training and intimate knowledge of things which an artist obtains perhaps in no other way.

Two years in Italy, and back Corot came to Paris, where, in the Salon of 1827, he had two creditable pictures. He was to make two more voyages to Italy, in 1835 and in 1843, before he settled down in his own land to paint in his own personal manner, a manner influenced by the younger generation of painters, the new men who were setting the art world by the ears. The influence of Bonnington and Constable was potent on him, as it was on the rest of the group with which Corot's name is associated. Corot was forty when he passed from the classical Italian manner to the modern school.

When Corot was thirty-two, his father, after the manner of French parents, announced that he had made matrimonial projects for his

son, having chosen a suitable young woman who had a proper *dot*, and he desired to talk it over with Camille. Matrimony, however, was not for young Corot; nothing, in short, was farther from his thoughts. In telling his friends of his interview, he recounts how he said to his senior: "My dear father, I was not alone in my studio when you came in. In the next room there is a woman who enters and who leaves at my pleasure. Her name is *La Folie*; she is my Muse. She comes to enchant me; and, when the cup is full, I say to her: 'Vanish, invisible sunbeam!'" So Corot remained a bachelor; but he was not averse to the society of women, and he was far from being a hermit, taking a keen interest in all forms of amusement, dancing, mingling socially; and always he was the life of any party, with his pleasant voice which he was not disinclined to place at the service of any company in which he found himself.

In later years Corot used to tell of a certain young woman named Rose, employed in his mother's shop, who, interested along with some

of the other workgirls in the romantic career of the son of her patroness, used to come over and watch him painting his first sketches along the Seine, opposite the shop. This Rose came more frequently than the rest and there was a mildly sentimental attachment which ripened into a genuine regard; but it never amounted to any more serious situation than that the young woman, never marrying, occasionally came to the painter's studio, where the visit was one of formality.

In the year 1831, Corot sent to the Salon, which had been closed in 1828, 1829 and 1830, a view in the Forest of Fontainebleau. Two years later he had another view of the same woodland, and the next season still a third. This last one, in 1834, gained him a medal of the second class, his first recompense, and one which completely changed the attitude of his father to him, an attitude which up to that time had been one of toleration only. Now, however, that so important an award as a second medal had come to his son, the father realised that Camille had made a place for himself and

he was henceforward taken most seriously. Needless to add, also, that the medal was of great encouragement to Corot himself.

All this time and during the life of father, mother, and sister, there was the greatest affection between Corot and all his family. The slightest wish of his parents was a law unto the painter, who delighted—so long as he was permitted to paint, and was not obliged to marry—to show his obedience and his filial regard, the family being always tenderly united. Once, when he was in Italy, at Venice, he received a letter from his father saying that they missed him very much and wished that he would return to them. Corot went instantly, glad to do any and every thing they asked of him. When, in 1846, the French government gave Corot the Cross of the Legion of Honour, the dear old bourgeois parents of the artist were dumbfounded. It was quite beyond their comprehension that for so trifling a thing as a few little pictures, painted on wood or canvas, a man should receive so stupendous an honour. The family knew from their ac-

quaintance at court, where Mme. Corot was a sort of official dressmaker and so heard the gossip, that to receive the coveted red ribbon was an honour worth the while, one giving the son a standing all the money of the parents could not purchase. "Camille," said the proud father, happy, but with an air that disclosed his utter lack of understanding of the profession, "seems after all to have talent."

About this time it is told that Corot's friends in Barbizon found him in a very meditative mood. Upon pressing him for the reason, he is said to have remarked: "Up to this time I had a complete collection of Corots. Recently I sold one for the first time!"

An amusing story is told of the first time Corot sold a picture. A friend came to him and, laying down two hundred and fifty francs (fifty dollars), said he had been commissioned by a friend to buy a canvas. Corot thought he was joking, offered to give him the picture and handed him back the money. But the friend insisted that the affair was one of commerce and passed the bills back. Seeing that he was in

earnest, Corot took the money, very much flattered, but he insisted upon adding two or three little canvases in addition to the one selected!

When Corot received his Cross of the Legion of Honour, as showing the simplicity of the man and his father's attitude to him, the father remarked to his wife, "I think we shall have to still further increase Camille's allowance;" and they did so. Corot was then a man of fifty, but he accepted the addition to his income as a schoolboy might.

As early as 1844 there were not lacking critics of discernment who had a full appreciation of Corot's work. One of these, Thoré, remarked about a certain little landscape: "Stop and examine a little picture. It has at first the air of a confused sketch, but presently you feel the air gentle and almost motionless. You plunge into the diaphanous mist which floats over the river and loses itself far, far away in the greenish tones of the sky at the horizon. You hear the nearly imperceptible noises of this quiet piece of nature, almost the shivering of the leaves or the motion of a fish

at the top of the water. You find all the sentiment of an evening when, seated alone at the side of the lake, after a wearisome day, you have waited until the night has lit up the first great stars of evening. If the chief purpose of painting is to communicate to others the impressions felt by an artist before nature, the landscapes of Corot fulfil the conditions of art." Yet as late as 1847, although he had had a second medal and the Legion of Honour, Corot was comparatively little known outside of his own small circle.

Of all landscape painters Corot must be accounted the most poetical. No one was more of a poet at heart, nor possessed of a truer instinct. He seemed to have an intuitive feeling for composition, for the beautiful in nature, for her delicate colour harmonies. He worked quite as much in his own studio as he did out of doors and you will search in vain for much absolute realism. Frequently he was found painting before nature in the open, things of his own imagination without the slightest reference either to the scene in front of him, or to

the time of day. Nature to him was rather a suggestion; rarely, in later years, a hard, compelling taskmaster. The beauties of Ville d'Avray were never so lovely in the concrete as they were in the mind of Corot and on his canvases. Trees there were made to conform to his notions of proper placement in a composition, rather than to the actual conditions about him. Which of course is the way with most landscape painters and eminently proper when one is making a picture. Corot had spent no little time in the serious consideration and study of forms before he permitted himself to take such flights of fancy. Muther says of him: "Of all the Fontainebleau painters, Corot was the least a realist; he was the least bound to the earth, and he was never bent upon any exact rendering of a part of nature. No doubt he worked much in the open air; but he worked far more in his studio; he painted many scenes that lay before him, but more often those which he saw in his own mind. He is reported to have said on his death-bed: 'Last night I saw in a dream a landscape with a sky all rosy. It

was charming, and still stands before me quite distinctly; it will be marvellous to paint.' How many landscapes may he not thus have dreamed, and painted from the recollected vision. . . . For Corot it was the only way which allowed him to remain Corot, because in this way no unnecessary detail disturbed the pure, poetic nature. He spent his whole life in a dallying courtship with nature ever renewed."

There is a famous letter which Corot wrote to his friend Jules Dupré, wherein he describes his sensations at getting up before dawn and watching the approach of day. It is so genuinely written, so full of enthusiasm, the true emotion of a poetic soul, that it is worth quoting, for never before nor since has one so deliciously described the sensations of a painter under similar circumstances. It may be translated thus into English, although for many of the expressions there is really no equivalent for the French:

"One arises early," he says, "at three o'clock in the morning, before sunrise; you sit at the foot of a tree, looking, waiting. At first you

don't see much. Nature resembles a white sheet on which is scarcely visible the outlines of a few great masses of things. Everything is perfumed and all trembles under the freshening breeze of dawn. *Bing!* The sun gets clearer; but it has not yet torn away the veil of gauze behind which lie the meadow, the valley, the hills on the horizon. *Bing! Bing!* The first ray of the sun . . . another ray. Little flowers seem to awake joyously. Each has its trembling dewdrop. The quivering leaves are agitated by the breezes of the morning and in the trees invisible birds sing. It is as if the flowers offer up a prayer. The landscape lies entirely behind the transparent gauze of the ascending mist, gradually sucked up by the sun, which permits us to see, as it ascends, the silver-striped river, the meadows, the cottages, the far-receding distance. At last you can see what you imagined at first. *Bam!* The sun has risen. *Bam!* Everything sparkles, shines. Everything is in full light—light soft and caressing as yet. The backgrounds with their simple contours and harmonious tone are lost in



Courtesy M. Knoedler & Co.

LANDSCAPE NEAR PARIS COROT



Courtesy M. Knoedler & Co.



Courtesy M. Knoedler & Co.

VIEW OF GISERS
COROT



the infinite sky through an atmosphere of azure and mist. The flowers lift up their heads. The birds fly here and there. A rustic on a white horse disappears in the narrowing path. The rounded willows seem to turn like on the river's edge; and the artist paints away."

And in the same letter there is an ode to evening which Muther considers to be one of the most delicate pages of French lyrics. There seems to be no adequate way of translating it into English and still preserving the genuine spirit of the Gallic original, so it is given as Corot wrote it:

"La nature s'assoupit . . . cependant l'air frais du soir soupire dans les feuilles . . . la rosée cmperle le velours des gazons. . . . Les nymphes fuient . . . se cachent . . . et désirent être vues. . . . Bing! une étoile du ciel qui pique une tête dans l'étang. . . . Charmant étoile, dont le frémissement de l'eau augmente le scintillement, tu me regardes . . . tu me souris en clignant de l'oeil. . . . Bing! une seconde étoile apparaît dans l'eau; une seconde

oeil s'ouvre. Soyez les bienvenues, fraîches et charmantes étoiles. . . . Bing! Bing! Bing! trois, six, vingt étoiles. . . . Toutes les étoiles du ciel se sont donné rendez-vous dans cet heureux étang. . . . Tout s'assombrit encore. . . . L'étang seul scintille. . . . C'est un fourmillement d'étoiles. . . . L'illusion se produit. . . . Le soleil étant couché, le soleil intérieur de l'âme, le soleil de l'art se lève. . . . Bon! Voilà mon tableau fait."

All this time, even when Corot sold his work, it was at the modest price which he insisted the buyer fix for himself! As late as 1851, his picture called *Une Matinée* was badly hung in an entrance hall in the Salon and the public scarcely noticed it. Corot even made the experiment of standing before it himself, hoping thereby to induce others to do the same thing, for he was a very human, everyday sort of person, was Corot, with nothing of the high and mighty genius about him. Presently he did manage to cause a young man to stop and look, but the young woman with him remarked,

"This is dreadful; let us move on;" and Corot gave up the attempt. This same painting remained unsold at the exhibition and for a long time was in Corot's studio until he disposed of it finally for \$140. Corot lived to see it sold at public auction for \$2,500. The picture later went to the Luxembourg gallery; and it is now one of the prized possessions of the Louvre and worth a fortune. One has only to look at any reproduction of this lovely canvas to be dumbfounded at the lack of perception of the public of those days who passed by such a masterpiece with indifference. In a beautiful, poetic landscape, exquisitely painted, full of all the tenderness and charm of the master, Corot has introduced some dancing figures of woodland nymphs that give life and joyousness to the arrangement. The simplicity, the artistry, and the naïveté are all convincing at a glance.

Prices, however, began to advance; and in 1855 Corot sold his picture from the exhibition of that year for ten thousand francs, asking that sum with great hesitation and largely as an experiment. He was most surprised

when the patron made no objections to the price named. In 1868, the Paris dealer, Durand-Ruel, gave him a similar sum for his picture, *Lot and His Daughters*. Five years later this picture merchant sold it to the Count Camondo for 13,000 francs. Later, on the death of that nobleman, M. Durand-Ruel bought the canvas back for 100,000 francs, and it was subsequently sold to an American collector for an advance of many dollars on that price.

This *Lot and His Daughters*, as well as many of the figure compositions of Corot, gives small notion of the great charm of the painter. He was best in his landscape motives, where he introduced the figures simply as agreeable notes of colour, or with the idea of enlivening the composition by some human note. It was in the tender treatment of skies, trees, and distances, particularly in the early dawn or the twilight, that the man excelled, and while he was always capable, he was at his best in such renderings.

Corot was the life of every party wherein he



Courtesy W. Knudler & Co.

DANCING NYMPHS

COROT



Collection of David Warfield

LANDSCAPE



Courtesy M. Knoedler & Co.



Courtesy M. Knoedler & Co.

found himself. As has been said, he fairly exuded gaiety, and in his company it was impossible to be sad or downcast. A son of Millet recounts how Corot once, at Barbizon, came into his father's studio while Millet was engaged in working at his famous canvas, *The Man with the Hoe*. Corot had a carriage outside and insisted that Millet go along with him for a ride. "But," said Millet, "what of my picture? I must push it and I ought not to leave it." Corot looked at it, but to him the sober theme had no appeal. The dreariness of it repulsed this cheerful man who was so accustomed to look on the bright side of the world. "The same brutal peasant as usual," he said. "Your man is simply an awful specimen. Come along outside. You need a change. Get into the open, it will do you good;" and, much against his will, Millet went. "Father came back," said young Millet, "with a new note of gaiety. He was cheerful for some time to come."

Indeed, Corot brought cheer into a good many lives during his seventy-nine years, and

his charity in cheer began right in his own family. It is said that no evening passed, when he was home, that he did not sit down to a rubber of whist with his beloved old mother—whom, by the way, he survived but a short time—while to his father and sister he was devotion itself. Says Muther:

“Corot was as great and strong as a Hercules. In his blue blouse, with his woolen cap, and his inevitable short Corot pipe in his mouth—a pipe which has become historical—one would have taken him for a carter rather than a celebrated painter. At the same time he remained during his whole life—a girl; twenty years senior to all the great landscape painters of the epoch, he was at once the patriarch in their eyes and their younger comrade. His long white hair surrounded the innocent face of a ruddy country girl, and his kind and pleasant eyes were those of a child listening to a fairy tale. In 1848, during the fighting on the barricades, he asked his janitor with childish astonishment: ‘What is the matter? Are we not satisfied with the government?’ And dur-

ing the war of 1870, this great, hoary-headed child of seventy-four bought a musket, to join in fighting against Germany.

“Benevolence was the joy of his old age. Every friend who begged for a picture was given one, while for money he had the indifference of a hermit who has no wants and neither sows nor reaps, but is fed by his Heavenly Father. He ran breathlessly after an acquaintance to whom, contrary to his wont, he had refused five thousand francs. ‘Forgive me,’ he said; ‘I am a miser, but there they are.’ And when a picture dealer brought him ten thousand francs, he gave him the following directions: ‘Send them to the widow of my friend Millet; only, she must believe that you have bought pictures from *him*.’

“His one passion was music, his whole life an eternal song. Corot was a happy man, and no one deserved more to be happy. In his kind-hearted vivacity and his even good spirits he was a favourite with all who came near him and called him familiarly their Papa Corot. Everything in him was healthy and natural;

his was a harmonious nature, living and working happily. This harmony is reflected in his art. And he saw the joy in nature which he had in himself.

“Everything that was coarse and horrible in nature he avoided, and his own life was passed without romance, or any terrible catastrophe. He has no picture wherein there is a harassed tree vexed by the storm. Corot’s own spirit was touched neither by passions nor by the strokes of fate. There is air in his landscapes, but never storm; streams, but not torrents; waters, but not floods; plains, and not cloven mountains. All is soft and quiet as his own heart, whose peace the storm never troubled. No man ever lived a more orderly, regular and reasonable life. He was spendthrift only where others were concerned. He had an aversion to everything passionate in nature, to everything irregular, sudden, or languid, to the feverish burst of storm, to the relaxing languor of summer heat. He loved all that was quiet, symmetrical, fresh, peaceful, and blithe; the cheerfulness of his own

spirit is reflected in everything he did. The nymphs and bacchantes whom he had met as a youth by the tomb of Virgil visited him in the evening of life in the forest of Fontainebleau, and in the meadows of Ville d'Avray; the evening dusk, the hour after sunset is peculiarly the hour of Corot; the very preference for the harmonious beauty of dying light was the effluence of his own harmonious temperament. When he would, Corot was a colourist of the first order. As a man, Corot avoided all dramas and strong contrasts; everything abrupt or loud was repellent to his nature. Thus it was that the painter, too, preferred the clear grey hours of evening, in which nature envelops herself as if in a delicate, melting veil of gauze. Here he was able to be entirely Corot, to paint without contours and almost without colours, to bathe in the soft, dusky atmosphere. He saw lines no longer; everything was breath, fragrance, secrecy, and vibration. Elysian airs began to breathe, and the faint echo of the rushing streamlet sounded gently murmuring in the wood; the soft arms

of the nymphs clung round him, and from the neighbouring thickets tender, melting melodies chimed forth like *Æolian* harps."

We have spoken of the generosity of Corot, who was ever thoughtful for his friends and for many who had not the slightest claim upon his time or his purse. His charity was proverbial. He could never resist an appeal, though it grieved him greatly if any mention was made of his gifts. It is said he contributed no less than fifty thousand francs to the French government during the siege of Paris, to enable them to relieve the suffering of the poor, and to buy provisions for the needy. To his brother painters he was continually directing his attention, buying a picture here, interceding with the dealers, and generally doing all the good he could. Thus it was he made a host of friends, for all who came in contact with him fell immediately under his gentle sway.

In 1872, his fiftieth year as a painter, it was proposed to have some celebration of the event; but for one reason or another this was delayed



Courtesy Cotter & Co

DANCE D'AMOURS

COROT



Courtesy Scott & Fowles Co.,

THE BATHERS
COROT



until the spring of 1874, and that year a committee was formed to present the veteran with a medal, since twice he had come within a few votes of having the Medal of Honour at the Salon, but had missed that distinction. A beautiful design was made, cast in gold, and given at a dinner arranged especially at the Grand Hotel in Paris, on December 29, 1874. About four hundred people were present when the distinguished artist received the tribute, the work of the sculptor Geoffroy de Chaume. The master was greatly moved. "I am very happy to feel that I am loved like this," he said.

In a short while this gentle soul was to find himself upon a bed of sickness from which he was never to get up alive. There was an operation, and many complications ensued. On February 23, 1875, one of the religious sisters, who was attending him, offered him some of the medicine prescribed by his physician. Corot shook his head sadly. "These remedies are useless, my good Sister," he murmured; "I have no need for them on the journey I am

about to undertake;" and shortly afterward he breathed his last. A little before he had said, in a feeble voice: "When the spring comes, I will paint a beautiful picture; I see a sky full of roses." To the last he thought of his art, which was indeed his very life.

Corot had all the Christian virtues, but he had not been an attendant at church. Indeed, though his creed was of the finest, he had been a most liberal thinker in matters religious; and when his funeral was held at the Church of St. Eugène, near where he lived, a tactless priest took that occasion to indulge in some ill-chosen remarks, to a congregation consisting of the artist's warm friends and admirers, the result being an unseemly disturbance, with loud protests. It seemed the irony of fate that the gentlest of men should have been the occasion of an unfortunate excitement in a sacred edifice; but the tactless preacher was finally prevailed upon to desist and the services were concluded. The great tenor Faure sang at the funeral the *andante* movement from Beethoven's *Symphony in A*, for Corot had ex-

pressed the wish that he might be buried to the music of that sublime composition. The Director of Fine Arts, M. Le Chennevières, delivered an oration over the grave, as is the custom in France when a distinguished artist dies, and, though in life he had had little official recognition, in death, at least, that honour was paid Corot.

Possibly apocryphal, but eminently characteristic of the man, is the story how on his death-bed, when the religious sister offered him some food, the artist said to her in a faint voice: "Papa Corot is lunching up there to-day."

His friend Jules Dupré said of him, when he heard of his death, "It will be hard to replace the artist; the man can never be replaced."

The year he died Corot was represented with three canvases in the exhibition, *Les Bûcherons*, *Plaisirs du Soir* and *Biblis*, all now famous. They were draped with crêpe, as is customary when the artist has passed away. That same year two hundred and twenty-eight of his

works were shown at the *École des Beaux Arts*, in a special exhibition; while in the following June a posthumous sale of his works took place in the *Hôtel Drouot*—the famous auction mart in Paris—which realised nearly two million francs, there being six hundred numbers in the catalogue.

Corot was a very fecund worker and, painting for the most part landscapes, he worked with great rapidity, enormous skill, and astonishing facility. Many of the pictures, too, resemble each other, save for some slight change of horizon, or the placement of tree forms. He had the gift of completing many of his compositions at a single sitting, the result being an enormous output during his long and very active life, for he was rarely away from his easel. It is undeniable, too, that the man had a distinct manner and that he might, in a way, be accused of a certain monotony as well; but in spite of all this there was enormous original charm in his way of seeing nature and in his rendering—a rendering not overdifficult of imitating, which has led to many forgeries,

for when the work of a painter is so greatly in demand and at such enormous prices, the cupidity of the unscrupulous is unduly excited. It is said that there are more landscapes in America alone purporting to be by Corot than the man did in all his long and active life. Since it has been the fashion of recent years to have Corots, and since so many collectors buy not pictures but names, many spurious examples have passed undetected, not alone into obscure collections, but occasionally into the hands of well known amateurs. A French painter, a man of talent named Trouillebert, for many years, with deliberation and amazing impudence, painted so much in the manner of Corot that it was with difficulty one could tell his work from that of the master. In 1883, it was discovered that Alexandre Dumas had purchased from a dealer a work bearing the signature of Corot which in reality had been executed by Trouillebert. It was the latter who discovered the forgery of Corot's name and went to the courts to have permission to place his own signature on the work.

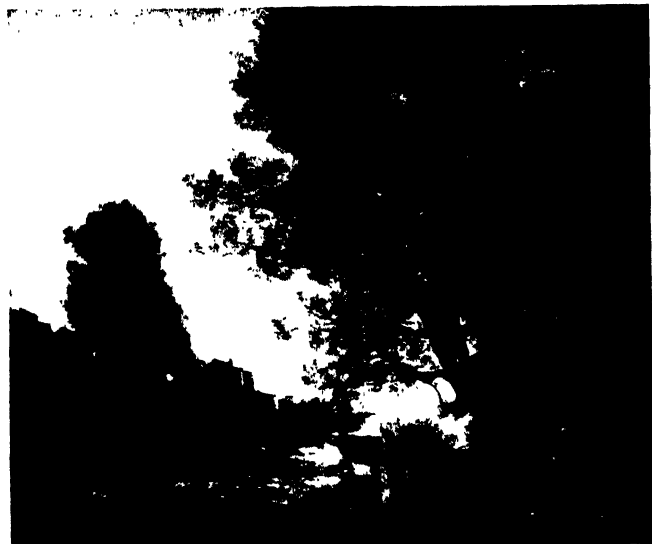
The incident was the talk of Paris for some time and caused no little ill feeling on the part of Dumas, who professed to be considerable of an art critic. Trouillebert himself, however, seems never to have realised the sorry figure he cut in the matter, and he went on to the end imitating Corot.

For the first ten years after Corot's death, prices remained steady; then they advanced by leaps and bounds. In 1886, in New York many Corots came upon the market to be sold at large figures. A *Landscape* brought \$5,000; *On the River*, \$9,000; *Landscape and Animals*, \$4,050; and the Corcoran Gallery, of Washington, paid \$15,000 for the *Ramasseurs de Bois*. These prices had naturally a strong influence on the Paris market, the prices there increasing accordingly and remaining high for a couple of years, when they declined again. Every now and then a spurious example came on the market, causing a feeling of suspicion regarding the rest. However, in 1890 prices were again pushed up; though in those days the figures were never so high in Paris as they



Courtesy Scott & Foulkes Co.

MEN IN BOAT
COROT



Courtesy Scott & Foulkes Co.

were in America. In December, 1901, Corot's *Les Bergers* sold for 43,800 francs. From then on, prices steadily augmented and have never since declined.

As giving an intimate glimpse of Corot the man, by one who knew him personally in the flesh, who talked often with him, we may quote from the distinguished Parisian art critic, the late Albert Wolff, who thus wrote of him:

"His renown, now fixed for eternity, had erected itself slowly upon a labour of fifty years, of which the first half had simply been a long strife between the ancient successful routine, unrecognisant of such a master, and the obstinacy of the artist himself in walking straight ahead, athwart the disdain of some, the ignorance of others. In this fine soul no bitterness had been left by the long combat of genius with sleek mediocrity. Corot, at the culmination of his career, would talk without any irony of those who for so long a period had denied him. In the conversations I have had with him this mighty artist never allowed the smallest trace of resentment to transpire, whether

against the exhibition juries who had rejected his early works, or against the blind spectator who had passed with indifference before the revelations contained in his canvas. He would tell me of these episodes in his career, not in the tone of a man willing to boast of the obstacles he had cleared and the recalcitrants he had imposed on, but like an intelligence replete in its achievement, innocently and simply, without bitterness as without braggadocio.

“When he talked in this vein, giving the recital of injustices received, to the accompaniment of that easy smile which was like a radiation of goodness over his fine patriarch’s head, we venerated him for his art at the same time that we loved him for the rare quality of his heart of gold. Over one and the other the passage of the years had not been able to steal away from the artist a single one of his enthusiasms, from the man a particle of his child-like goodness. This old man was not like other men of his years, of whom the best are unable to repress a kind of chagrin in comparing the long-travelled road behind them with the short

one which remains to be measured. He had but to install himself in the face of nature to recapture the artistic ardour and the hopes of one's twentieth year. When young he had strolled singing over the plains, and old age found him just as free from care as he had been half a century before. We could but stand spellbound before this spectacle of beautiful age, when we would thus discover him bent like a schoolboy over his themes to the last, now erasing with a movement of anger the study which would not come up to the example of nature contemplated by the artistic eye, now drawing back with sudden satisfaction to better calculate the effect of the effort; when we would hear him from far off, approving himself aloud and awarding himself a prize with the words, 'Famous, that bit!' or criticising himself roundly with the sentence, 'We will begin it all over again, my lad!' And then we must needs look with softened eyes upon Corot the man, even as we bow with emotion before his results."

But though we have referred to Corot's

manner, which could be copied in a way to deceive the elect, this manner, as has been claimed by no less a distinguished writer than the late Theodore Robinson, the American painter, was the least of the artist's claims to our admiration. It was admirable indeed, so far as it enabled him to show forth upon his canvas his joyous vision of morning skies and moving foliage, of nature never fixed or stagnant, nature even in her calmest moods vibrating with life; but, aside from that, it was nothing remarkable. How he came to adopt it we can imagine from his own narration. "I arrived in Rome," Corot writes, "the merest tyro in sketching. Two men stopped to converse; I began to sketch them, beginning with one part, the head, for example. They would separate, and leave me with two pieces of heads on my paper. I resolved not to return without having *something*. I attempted, therefore, to sketch in the twinkling of an eye the first group that presented itself. If the figures remained in position for a time I had, at least,

the character, the general outline; if they remained long I added details."

"In that quotation," says Mr. Robinson, "we have Corot's whole creed of expression. He considered the impression of the whole the matter of first importance and a wise suppression of the infinity of details demanding representation a necessity. Hence the unfailing unity of his pictures. He was one of the first painters who dared to maintain that a picture is finished when it gives the desired effect, that henceforth all the scratching in the world adds nothing, and perhaps for that reason he is by many called the founder, or father, of the present-day Impressionistic movement. The transition has been natural from the discoveries, as we may call them, of Corot, to the more radical and sometimes disquieting work of the modern Impressionists—men younger in years and better fighters, but substantially carrying out the same ideas, certainly at least in the matter of atmosphere and synthesis. . . . Technically Corot is sometimes said to be a

thin, superficial, and foggy painter. But what he loved best to paint often precluded any severe registration of form. To demand of his foregrounds, seen through the early morning light, and covered with rank herbage and flowers, the masterly and obvious construction of a Rousseau, who loved the open and the full light of day, would be manifestly absurd. Draughtsmanship, in the highest sense, is as intangible a quality as colour. It may be defined to be, briefly, a feeling for form and line, independent of mere accuracy; and this Corot possessed in a high degree. It has been well said: 'There are painters who draw more than Corot; there are none who draw better.' The drawing of his figures is not academic, but how well the little groups stand or move, and how well they belong to their landscape! Even his cows, with their droll length of body, it would be possible to defend from a decorative point of view. But his values are faultless. Every thing is in its place; you go around and between his trees; you look from point to point of his ground receding just as it

does in nature. Finally, how consummately right and beautiful are his silhouettes of trees and their distances as seen against the sky. Were ever trees so drawn before? . . . His whole life was spent in study, not typographic study of detail, but of the more subtle qualities of modelling and drawing, and the law of *enveloppe* and values. Nor is he careless and sloven as a painter. At the right place he knows how to be as precise as a knife-edge, and then again to lose and confuse details, as nature loses and confuses them. . . . It was Constable who said that 'no arrogant man is allowed to see nature in all her beauty,' and surely there never was a painter with less arrogance than Corot. Unceasing in his devotion and untiring in his endeavours to express nature's beauties, he was continually self-distrustful. He was aware of that curious inability to judge his own work which has been the stumbling-block of many a painter. He said once, in returning from a painting-tour, 'I have brought back thirty canvases; among them I hope there are five or six good ones.'

“Corot’s long and tranquil life, his singleness of aim, and perhaps the fact that success came to him late, resulted in an art that is exceptionally individual and personal in its spirit. . . . His art to many is a painted music. It is lyric and suggestive in the highest degree. . . . Before his time there was little possibility, with the then existing ideas, of a landscape which should have the charm of intimacy; and even among his contemporaries, the Fontainebleau-Barbizon Men, great as they are, and much as we admire and praise them, we find little in their work to love as we love and admire the work of Corot. Corot belongs to a category of painters, not large, that possess what is called ‘charm’. They do not take themselves too seriously. In them there is nothing of the pedant, and they are perhaps often reproached for their lack of intellectuality. But before one of their canvases we stop involuntarily. It breathes forth so much honesty and simple radiance; it has not been painted by cold-blooded skill, but has painted itself. It is interesting to hear Corot speak

about this: 'There are days when it is I who paint; in those days the work is bad. The days when it is not I, an angel has come and worked for me; then it is good.' Innocence of vision many have in early youth, but Corot never quite lost his, and it gave a singular charm to the work of the fully developed painter."

If Corot was denied for many years full recognition of his great talent, time has well remedied the lack of appreciation, for to-day his name is a potent one wherever art is spoken of, wherever pictures are sold. In many cases, too, the prices are as disproportionately large as they were disproportionately small during the life of the artist. Absurdly great sums are given for indifferent work; for, like all artists, Corot was not invariably at concert pitch, having his inspired moments and those when the muse did not perch on his shoulder. America has been the greatest purchaser of his work, and some of his most noteworthy examples have reached these shores. For many of them, collectors have paid immense fortunes.

**NARCISSE VIRGILIO DIAZ DE LA
PEÑA**

1808-1876

III

NARCISSE VIRGILIO DIAZ DE LA PEÑA

OF all the group of French painters known as the "Barbizon Men," altogether the most cheerful, the jolliest, the most delightfully human, was the Spanish artist, Diaz, who in his sixty-six years of life, becoming a Frenchman of Frenchmen, managed to get more entertainment, more amusement, and more genuine pleasure out of existence than all of his confrères put together. He was not without his discouragements, his hardships, his anxieties, and, for a while, great poverty. He was even a cripple all his life, and he knew continuous and intense physical pain, but all fell off of him like magic; he allowed nothing to interfere with the joy of living, with his cheer. It seemed impossible to dampen his ardour, to repress his enormous flow of good humour; his spirits were ever buoyant, his courage great, his charm undeniable. Said

his intimate friend, Jules Dupré, standing sorrowfully at the grave of Diaz, "The sun has lost one of its most beautiful rays." His great courage came to him as a direct inheritance from his good mother, a proscribed refugee patriot from Spain who, with her husband, had made her way across the border, over the mountains from Salamanca to Bordeaux, where the artist was born, on August 21, 1808.

Marie Manuela Belasco was the name of the brave and capable woman who brought Diaz into the world, his father being one Thomas Diaz, a worthless coward, who deserted his wife, once he found himself in French territory, and it is said made his way to England. How he did this, being dead poor, history does not recount, but thither it is stated he went, and with this flight he disappears from these pages, as well as from the decent respect of all men. The voyage of the pair from Spain was made just prior to the birth of the artist; so it may be imagined the woman was of a splendid bravery and had much physical suffering to endure. Left to her own resources, with ab-

solutely no funds, the mother managed by unexampled courage and bravery to support herself and her offspring as a governess, teaching French and Spanish, and making her way, with occasional stops, to Paris, where she had friends and relatives. But she had had a strange experience, shouldering a musket like a man in the revolt in Spain, and when it became a matter of life or death in the support of her child, she rose to the emergency and brought her child safely to the age of ten, when she died. From Paris, Madame Diaz had thought it well to settle in the suburbs, at Sèvres, where she found remunerative work in the family of an English gentleman whose children she taught languages; and there she made many warm friends, notably a retired Protestant clergyman, of the village of Bellevue, nearby. His name was Monsieur Michel Paira, and he it was who at her death volunteered to take charge of the orphan boy and bring him up. While the good minister taught the lad his classics and saw to it that his education was well started, the boy seems to have

been a problem to the guardian and was permitted much liberty. Of a passionate southern nature, Diaz all through his life was impatient of restraint, a quality that showed itself early, for we find him wandering about the countryside when he should have been at his lessons.

While this freedom from the proper restraint of home life and that of school made, in a certain way, for the free development of the mind of the young man, it resulted in a serious happening that rendered him a cripple for the rest of his life, through which he went with a wooden leg. Asleep one summer afternoon in the woods of Meudon, Diaz was bitten by some venomous viper and he awoke in great pain, to find his leg swollen. Hobbling home, he was attended by an ignorant serving woman, with the result that gangrene set in, and it became necessary that the member should be amputated. This further necessitated a long sojourn at the hospital, where one may imagine the lonely lad filled with strange thoughts, for he was always a dreamer, and impetuous at



Courtesy M. Knudsen & Co.

THE FROG POND
DIAZ





IN THE FOREST
DIAZ



LANDSCAPE
DIAZ

the imprisonment. After his convalescence and when the wound had sufficiently healed, he was apprenticed to a printer, where his career was brief, and subsequently he was sent to the porcelain works at Sèvres, so famous for their artistic productions. Here he had as comrades, Jules Dupré, Nicholas Cabat, and Auguste Raffet; with Diaz a quartette destined to become famous painters of the landscape and the figure, Raffet being known as the artistic historian of the French soldier, particularly in the wars of the first Napoleon. All of these artists were a sore trial to the director of the porcelain works, for each was an independent spirit having nothing in common with the finished, careful production demanded in the painting on the china.

At this time, too, Diaz became imbued with the spirit of the Romantic school of which Delacroix was the leader; and the director of the manufactory—who, by the way, was one Arsene Gillet, an uncle of Jules Dupré—promptly discharged the capricious young Spaniard. Yet, as a writer has said, Diaz

builded perhaps better than he knew, for he had imbibed certain qualities of decoration that remained with him to the end of his career, which gave his work a brilliancy—at times a gaudiness—of tone, but nearly always a fanciful picturesqueness.

From the porcelain works, Diaz enrolled himself as a pupil of one Souchon, director of the art school at Lille, an indifferent artist who subsequently became the master of the distinguished and brilliant portrait painter, Carolus-Duran. His influence on both these men was negligible, however; but at his studio Diaz met as a fellow student one Sigalon, in all probability son of Xavier Sigalon, one of the revolutionary group of which were Géricault, Delacroix, Ary Scheffer, and others. The younger Sigalon was a pretty poor painter, but he had a great admiration for Diaz and it was he who managed to dispose of some of the early work of the Barbizon man. He sold these—when he had luck—for sums varying from three to five dollars, but at that, Diaz considered himself most fortunate.

Yet Diaz had few of the financial trials and tribulations that beset the rest of the Barbizon group. First of all, he was not lacking in business shrewdness; then, he did not hesitate to paint early in his career such attractive subjects as he knew would find a market and, as naturally he inclined to a certain sort of prettiness, both in composition and in the colour arrangement, his efforts did not lack a market; not, to be sure, at large prices, but there was always a clientele for his wares, and as his wants were small, things went very well with him. He had a great way of trading his little panels—now of such priceless value—for bric-à-brac; and for a rug, a bit of brass, or faience, he would give a beautiful landscape or a figure piece, with the result that his studio was full of lovely objects, chosen with rare knowledge of collectorship too, for his taste in such matters was impeccable and those were times when the carpets of the East, and the art objects of far away Japan and China, were to be had for a song. Nor did he, in these early days at least, concern himself much with the serious side of

art. Life to him was, as indeed it always appeared, a good deal of a joke. He sought—and found—great pleasure in the mere delight of living.

Diaz was twenty-seven when he exhibited in the Salon a picture called *The Battle of Medina*. The work is described as a formless sketch which his friends christened *The Battle of the Broken Paintpots*. At any rate, it seems to have been a canvas of only modest value, by no means having the qualities that later were to make him the master. This was in 1835. Four years before, Diaz had met Rousseau, then a lad of nineteen, but so impressive in his grave dignity and serious mental attitude that he deeply influenced Diaz—his elder by four years, though always a big, overgrown boy.

Diaz used to meet Rousseau in the little café "*Le Cheval Blanc*," where the revolutionary group of painters would gather to discuss art, led by Decamps. The foundation of a warm friendship was laid here, and later the men were to see much of each other, while

Rousseau was to have a lasting effect on the art of Diaz. They were to meet at Barbizon, somewhere about 1836, there to live in close communion. Rousseau, whom his colleagues dubbed "*Le Grand Refusé*," was to inspire Diaz with higher, nobler notions of nature, to set him on a serious way of landscape painting, and generally to have the most healthy effect on the man and his art; while it is altogether likely the genial spirits, the cheerful nature, and the splendid humanity of Diaz, all had their appeal for Rousseau and brought him moments of happiness in a life by no means full of joyousness and cheer. Up to this time Diaz, living gaily in Paris, used to frequent the theatre, where he found inspiration for quaint compositions of an oriental nature, full of colour, fantasies of his brain, of jewel-like qualities at times, that always found buyers. Once at Barbizon, he became more serious, more the student; he came to search carefully for forms, for more sober arrangement of composition, and even when he indulged in flights of his imagination, which never failed him, the results

were always better considered, more artistic, of larger general significance.

Muther says of Diaz: "In his landscapes the Spaniard betrays himself. . . . Diaz has in him a little of Fortuny. Beside the great genius wrestling for truth and the virile seriousness of Rousseau, beside the gloomy, powerful landscapes of Dupré, with their deep, impassioned poetry, the sparkling and flattering pictures of Diaz seem to be rather light wares. For him nature is a keyboard on which to play capricious fantasies. His pictures have the effect of sparkling diamonds, and one must surrender one's self to his charm without asking its cause; otherwise it evaporates. Diaz has, perhaps, too much of the talent of the juggler. It sparkles as in a magic kaleidoscope. 'You paint stinging-nettles, and I prefer roses,' is the characteristic expression which he used to Millet. His painting is as piquant and as iridescent as a peacock's tail; but in this very iridescence there is often an unspeakable charm. It has the rocker-like brilliancy and the glancing chivalry which were peculiar to the man

himself, and made him the best of good company, the *enfant terrible*, the centre of all that was witty and spirited in the circle of Fontainebleau."

His optimism was something contagious. In the very early days when, for a short time, he was confronted with poverty and obtained a few sous by opening the doors of carriages as they drew up before the theatres, he was never discouraged. "What does it matter!" he exclaimed. "One of these days I shall have carriages and a golden crutch" (it will be remembered he had but one leg); "my brush will win them for me."

Muther continues: "As soon as the name of Diaz is mentioned, there rise in memory the recesses of a wood which the autumn has turned red, a wood where the sunbeams play, gilding the trunks of the trees; naked white forms repose amid mysterious lights, or there advance on paths of yellow gold sand, gaily draped odalisques, whose rich costume glitters in the rays of the sun. Few have won from the forest like him its beauty of golden sunlight and

verdant leaves. Others remained at the entrance of the forest; he was the first who really penetrated to its depths. The branches met over his head like the waves of the sea, the blue heaven vanished, and everything was shrouded. The sunbeams fell like the rain of Danaë through the green leaves, and the moss lay like a velvet mantle on the granite piles of rocks. He settled down like a hermit in his verdant hollow. The leaves quivered green and red, and covered the ground, sportively gilded by the furtive rays of the evening sun. Nothing was to be seen of the trees, nothing of the outline of their foliage, nothing of the majestic sweep of their boughs, but only the mossy stems, touched by the radiance of the sun. The pictures of Diaz are not landscapes, for the land is wanting; they are 'tree-scapes,' and their poetry lies in the sunbeams which dance, playing around them. 'Have you seen my last stem?' he would inquire of the visitors to his studio.

"These woodland recesses were the peculiar speciality of Diaz, and he but seldom aban-

done them to paint warm, dreamy pictures of summer. For, like a true child of the South, he cared only to see nature on beautiful days. He knows nothing of spring with its light mist, and still less of the frozen desolation of winter. The summer alone he knows, the summer and the autumn; and the summers of Diaz are an everlasting song, like the springs of Corot. Beautiful nymphs and other beings from the golden age give animation to his emerald meadows and his sheltered woods bathed in the sun; here are little homely looking nixies, and there are pretty Cupids and Venuses and Dianas of charming grace. And none of these divinities think about anything or do anything; they are not piquant like those of Boucher or Fragonard, and they know neither coquetry nor smiles. They are only goddesses of the palette; their wish is to be nothing but shining spots of colour, and they love nothing except silvery sunbeams which beam on their naked skin caressingly. If the painter wishes for more vivid colour, they throw round them shining red, blue, yellowish green, or gold-embroid-

ered clothes, and immediately are transformed from nymphs into Oriental women, as in a magic theatre. A fragment of soft silk, gleaming with gold, and a red turban were sufficient means for him to conjure up his charming and fanciful land of the Turks. Sometimes even simple mortals, wood-cutters, peasant girls, and gipsies, come into his pictures that the sunbeams may play upon them, while their picturesque rags form piquant spots of colour. Diaz is a fascinating artist, a great *charmeur*, and a feast to the eye."

Diaz was a noteworthy figure in the Barbizon group, a strong staff, somehow, for the others to lean upon; and he was of equal assistance in furnishing them with the cheer they needed in their otherwise drab lives, for both Millet and Rousseau were men of unusually sombre natures. Diaz it was who found them buyers—at a small price, to be sure, but buyers, when a sale stood between them and starvation. Often he would come back from Paris with a hundred or more francs in his pocket, the result of some deal with a buyer for



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THE BRACELET

DIAZ



Courtesy M. Knoedler & Co.

DEEP WOODLAND
DIAZ



FONTAINEBLEU

a Millet canvas, stopping perhaps at the baker's to buy a couple of loaves of bread to feed the hungry mouths of Millet's children. Then would he stump in on his one leg and, with great laughter and jokes, hail Millet as a *rentier*, because of the few pieces of silver he would lay down on the table, the proceeds of the sale. He came in as a veritable sunbeam and his presence seemed invariably to dispel gloom. Indeed, Diaz was such an incorrigible joker that it was difficult to know when he was serious, but all his jests were of the kindest nature and his concern was ever for his friends, for he effaced himself when possible.

A delightful story is told of an experience he had somewhere about 1864, when he was commanded to repair some painted ceilings which he had decorated many years before for the Tuileries, in the reign of Louis Philippe. Napoleon the Third had summoned Diaz to the palace. The painter came to his work, and being a great smoker lit his pipe and proceeded with the job. While he was thus engaged the Emperor entered and stood watching him.

Suddenly Diaz discovered his royal patron and was greatly embarrassed. Immediately he endeavoured to hide his pipe, but the Emperor burst into a laugh. "Ah," he said, "my dear Monsieur Diaz, I know your taste. Don't disturb yourself. Do exactly as if you were in your own studio," and he passed on. Later, a pompous official came into the room. To him, Diaz was an ordinary working painter doing a job of repairing the ceiling. He was furious that such a person should presume not only to smoke, but to smoke a plebeian pipe. "Hi, there!" he cried, "do you think you may smoke in the imperial palace? Put out your pipe immediately!" But Diaz, the imperturbable, sat there and looked at him with quiet serenity. "Old man," he said, "I have the permission of the boss." (*Mon bonhomme, j'ai la permission du bourgeois.*)

No one but an artist, and that artist Diaz, would have so referred to a reigning monarch; but it was eminently characteristic of Diaz. He was not lacking in respect, but the humorous side invariably appealed to him, got the best

of his thoughts, and there was no situation that did not furnish him with some amusement.

Diaz married, but there seems to be little known of his family life save that he had a son, Emile, a youth of much talent for both painting and literature who died at the age of twenty-five and whose death was a severe blow to the father. Another son was Eugene, a musician whose published work attracted modest attention. The first son, the painter Emile, had studied with Rousseau and by him was greatly beloved. As Rousseau had no children, the death of this son of his friend was scarcely less of a loss to him, affecting him deeply.

The Franco-German War of 1870 found Diaz too old to fight—he was then sixty-two—so he went to Brussels and there remained during the hostilities, occupying a poor room in an old hotel. He had taken with him many sketches of the Forest of Fontainebleau and from these he made many important pictures in his very best manner. The conflict over, he came back to the capital and, with the return of prosperity, he obtained great prices for his

work. So successful was he that he bought a villa at Étretat, on the Channel, a great resort for the painters, and here for the remaining six years of his life he led a busy existence surrounded with beautiful art objects in his home where he was the beloved friend of all who were fortunate enough to hold his intimate acquaintance. Wealth so poured in upon him that he was enabled to gratify his every taste for the art luxuries he always loved.

He was further gratified by witnessing a performance at the Opera House of an opera by his son Eugene, *La Coupe de Roi de Thule*, the second musical composition by the young man to be publicly presented, the first having been *Le Roi Candaule*. Unfortunately, it was at this performance of the second work that Diaz, then a man of sixty-four years, caught a heavy cold that developed into an attack of pleurisy from which he really never recovered.

In 1871, after the war, it happened that there came to Paris a great quantity of art dealers, thinking because of the unsettled state of the country there would be many opportuni-

ties to obtain works of art at bargain prices. The very number of these merchants defeated their object, for keen competition resulted in excellent sales, and all picture values advanced enormously, those by Diaz among the rest. There is an entertaining story regarding the sale of one picture by Diaz. Away back in 1846, there was placed in the window of the Paris dealer Durand-Ruel, a painting by Diaz, one of his beautiful forest interiors, full of warm, rich colour, rendered in his inimitable manner. The great military painter Meissonier used to pass through that street every day and the canvas made a strong appeal to him. So compelling was this attraction that one day he found himself unable to withstand it any longer, and so he went inside the shop, only to find a customer haggling over the price of the painting. The merchant had asked but eight hundred francs for the work—\$160—and Meissonier was so indignant at the would-be buyer's effort to have the price reduced that he cried out indignantly: "Eight hundred francs! Absurd! For such a gem, too?"

Why, M. Durand-Ruel, I will take it," with which he proceeded to carry it away under his arm.

The intimacy between Diaz and Rousseau ripened quickly once the more silent man admitted Diaz into a close companionship, and they were mutually helpful, one to the other. From Rousseau, Diaz learned much of the technique of his trade, much of the secret of light and shade, and of the art of composition. In the matter of the use of the pigment, too, Rousseau gave Diaz much information, for he had made a study of the chemical properties of colour, a thing that had never occurred to Diaz, impetuous, unbridled enthusiast that he was. I have said elsewhere that Diaz at Barbizon, with the serious Rousseau working near him, turned his attention to a more sober interpretation of landscape, wherein he gave greater thought to form, tone, and construction. He studied trees, rocks, and gave greater attention to the relation of skies, distances, and foreground. The gaudy, oriental fantasies were in a measure neglected for quiet forest interior,

for glade, fruitful plain, sunlit foliage, or rich and harmonious effect of twilight and sunset. But his seriousness was only temporary, after all. It was the youthful impetuosity to the end. Application was irksome; rules and conventions he despised; and he went his way, unrestrained, passionate, versatile, unequalled, but rarely, if ever, uninteresting.

With all his failings, however, Diaz frequently rose to great heights, and there was about the man an enthusiasm that was at times contagious, a zeal that carried him safely over dangerous pitfalls and caused him to triumph, despite his weaknesses. He was possessed of a genuine colour instinct that asserted itself and gave him distinction, while in his more serious work, where he kept to simplicity of motive, he would frequently accomplish great results. Given a few figures so arranged that form and line were mere suggestions, and Diaz would now and then evolve a masterpiece; and let him be in full sympathy with his landscape, let the woodland, marsh or plain combine a few simple elements, and there would result a

splendid, serious picture worthy of his talent. In the painting of flowers he was not excelled in the beauty of the colour effects he obtained, though possibly these works do not always bear botanical analysis, for he declined to bow to arbitrary rules, either of form or tone, and in his enthusiasm he did not always cling to exact likeness, or perfect representation of his subject. Diaz rebelled at the application that carried with it profound study. He could and did work, but he required performance of the task in his own way. He was discouraged easily, turning from his path at obstacles that only made his comrade (Rousseau) struggle more seriously, and he would in his despair go back to easier channels, wherein he knew he could find his way with less difficulty.

His weaknesses are thus noted that a better understanding of the man may be had. But in art, as in literature, and even in humanity itself, there are enduring qualities that are above and beyond laws. As there are melodies that defy the rules of harmony and stir us to the very depths, so there are simple bits of



Collection John N. Willis, Esq.

SOU'S BOIS

DIAZ



Courtesy M. Knoedler & Co.

CHILDREN FISHING

DIAZ



Courtesy M. Knoedler & Co.

poetry that go straight to the heart, where classic elegance and elaboration leave us cold and unsympathetic. And there are contradictory natures, passionate, illogical, selfish at times, which yet wind themselves about our affections in some inexplicable manner. Others there be whose sunny brilliancy, despite unmistakable defects, draws us to them with unconscious power and holds us willing converts. So with Diaz and his work. We are aware of his shortcomings, we admit his incapacity in some directions, his lackings; and yet the inherent genius, rising higher than schools, than training, than accepted rules and authorities, fascinates us by the bewitching personality with which his canvases glow, the sensuous brilliancy of colour, the charm, grace and lovely harmonies of his inspired work. To classify him in the ranks of the painters is as difficult as to dissect his canvases. He may be judged by no standard save his own. Few men have passed him in the full appreciation of the potentialities of colour. It would seem as if he had accomplished all the possibilities of the pig-

ment that the palette offers. Take him at his best—and it is only thus that a man may be judged—he yields to no one in his marvellous tonal qualities, his grace, beauty, and original rendering.

If he gave to the world vagaries, and swerved from the realism of the materialistic side of nature, he spoke the utterances of a genuine poet, and he rarely had aught of the commonplace to say. His mission was to tell the story of elegance and beauty of colour and tone; he bothered little with the serious problem of mankind in his pictures. The joyous side of life he found full of interest; the gay, the brilliant, and the happy views of existence and nature held him as by a spell, exercising a weird fascination that he was unable to resist, if, indeed, he ever had any such desire. So he told his simple tale with engaging frankness, in his own way, and the narration had always the charm of the man's personality, the subtle touch of a delicate nature, appreciative of the many varying expressions of the different emotions upon which, like a skilled performer on some instru-

ment, with a full command of the strings, he played with vibrating touch. We may not go far to find the reasons for his success. He spoke from his soul, with a sincerity and a candour unmistakable. He painted because he loved to paint, and he succeeded because he gave himself up to that which returned him the most pleasure, and with which he was in the fullest sympathy. He rose above laws and technic; he was superior to academic formulas. In the end, his very weakness was his strength, for the fire of his impetuosity burned so brightly as to light up his efforts with a glow that has never dimmed.

Official recognition was never denied Diaz as it was Rousseau. Diaz had his first recompense in 1844, when he was thirty-six, the jury awarding him a medal of the third class. Two years later came a medal of the second class, while in two years more he had the great distinction of one of the first class, a high honour that is eagerly sought after and not invariably secured. Then, when he was forty-three, he was given the ribbon of the Legion of Honour

while his friend and master, Rousseau, was overlooked. Against what he termed this gross injustice, Diaz protested vehemently. At first, he was for returning the bauble, and only the violent protest of his friends prevented him from so doing. They persuaded him that it would only hurt Rousseau, while of course it would do Diaz no end of harm. Even then, he would not remain silent; at the dinner given to the new members of the order, he arose and proposed a toast to the health of "Théodore Rousseau, our master, who has been forgotten." The silence was appalling, but no one came to the rescue though many admitted the injustice of the neglect of the great French landscape painter, and the scene was a painful one. It will be seen that Diaz was always the *enfant terrible*, and also that he was ever concerned with the welfare of his friends. A writer in one of the French art magazines insisted that Diaz "was the son of Giorgione, the cousin of Correggio, and the grandson of Boccaccio."

Albert Wolff, the famous French critic,

knew Diaz in the flesh and describes his physical personality, though Diaz was an old man when Wolff first met him, just after the war of 1870. We are told he was a tall man, with a head by no means handsome, but full of energy, and his hair had remained conspicuously dark. He had a rough, though kind, voice, and he punctuated everything he said by pounding the floor with his wooden leg. This had ever been a custom of his and when he was younger he used to astonish people by suddenly twirling about on this leg as if he were a top, and then laughing heartily at the amazed expressions of the spectators. He spoke by spurts, and his rough voice would be taken for that of habitual command, though in a little while it would be seen this was entirely a mannerism and he would break out in peals of laughter. In conversation he was frank to the point of making his hearers at times uncomfortable, for his talk was the same, in tavern or drawing-room. When he was poor, he laughed at hardship; when he was rich, he remained simple. The théâtre he adored; a comic story, even of the most rudi-

mentary sort, set him in roars of laughter; the least annoyance made him swear like an old sailor. In truth, he was a distinct child of nature, but his anger disappeared as suddenly as it arrived, and then uproarious laughter would take its place. Wolff says he would writhe in a spasm of mad hilarity if you took off an actor in his presence, while a comic song at the dessert of an old-fashioned dinner was worth to him all the fashionable balls in the world. At first sight he was not attractive. His nature appeared rude; except for his glowing eyes there was nothing about his person of the distinction of his art. But after penetrating his intimacy, his delicate nature, so strangely in contrast with the surface, opened out like a delicious landscape which you discover after climbing a craggy road. At the heart of that rough bark you penetrated to the most exquisite refinements, fatherly affection in its most touching manifestation, and manly friendship without any grand word, but full of delicate attentions.

Diaz died on November 18, 1876, quietly,

in the arms of his wife, at Mentone, whither he had journeyed in search of health. Earlier in the month he had gone to the grave of his beloved son, on the occasion of the anniversary of the boy's death. There, the weather being inclement, he had caught another cold, and bronchitis laid him low for several days. The doctors ordered him to a warmer climate, but it was too late. It was characteristic of the man that on the day of his death he asked to be lifted up near the window that he might see the sunset! So passed away one of the most genuinely artistic souls in the history of art. It has been shown that he was a distinct character, one of the most interesting of the entire group of men whose names are associated with the village of Barbizon, and, in a larger sense, with the great Forest of Fontainebleau, for it was that woodland he painted with such consummate charm and skill. Probably no man ever went through life with the loss of a leg who missed it less, or with whom its absence interfered so little. He rode, he swam, he hunted, he even danced with the aid of the

wooden stump, and he made that misfortune a joke all through his life. He always referred to it as *mon pilon* (my stamper) and he thumped it on the floor to accentuate his remarks. Earlier in his career he invented a unique savings bank system. Occasionally in those days, when he sold a painting and did not need immediate cash, he had the money changed into small pieces of silver and these he would throw by the handful about his studio, after which he would dismiss the subject from his mind. When he became really pressed for money, he would get down on his hands and his one knee and search about until he found a piece that sufficed for his temporary wants!

When he was sketching in the open, he would sing and shout, stamp his wooden leg, and generally get rid of his superfluous energy in that manner, and always his laugh was the loudest in any party where he found himself.

A bohemian of the bohemians, he was, as I have said, the most cheerful and the most entirely human of all his confrères at the little French village.

JULES DUPRÉ
1811–1889

IV

JULES DUPRÉ

FROM painting Alpine scenes on clock cases to becoming one of the famous coterie of the Barbizon artists whose canvases now sell for fortunes is not only a considerable advance, but something in the nature of a romance. It was, however, the experience of Jules Dupré, and it is characteristic of this group, most of whom had astonishing experiences and were driven to many shifts in order to make a livelihood. Again, like several of the others, Dupré began his art experiences in the porcelain works at Sèvres, where his father had some sort of an establishment. It was in this town where an uncle, M. Gillet, also had a porcelain factory in which, later, Dupré was to work. Sèvres, it must be recalled, is a small village ten miles southwest of Paris, in the Department of Seine-et-Oise, entirely given over

to the making of pottery and it has there a famous museum of porcelains.

Dupré was born at Nantes, in 1811 or 1812—there is some discussion about the year, as there is as to the place of his nativity, though most of the authorities agree as to Nantes.

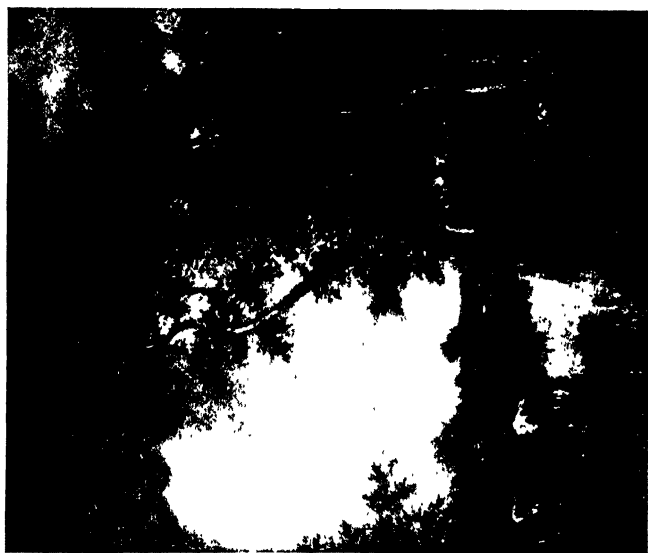
Of Dupré's experience in the porcelain works there seems to be little record. It is known, however, that he left there at an early age, for at nineteen he had a picture in the Salon, and he had previously taken some lessons from a painter named Diebold, who lived at the Isle-Adam, where some assert Dupré was born. At any rate, there Dupré worked with this artist for a while, when he went to Paris where he renewed his acquaintance with a fellow workman of the porcelain factory, Nicholas-Louis Cabat, a man exactly his own age, who was destined later to make a great success as a landscape painter and to achieve many official awards, including membership in the Institute, and the Legion of Honour.

Cabat and Dupré became very intimate, and as Cabat was strongly impressed with the new

Romantic movement in art, he managed to instill some of his theories in Dupré. But the latter had for some time a struggle against poverty, living in a garret, working under great difficulties, and selling his canvases for a song, generally in some second-hand shop. When matters were at their worst, when his fortunes at their lowest ebb, the unexpected happened. A very eccentric person came into the second-hand shop where the pictures of Dupré were displayed and bought a canvas, demanding at the same time the address of the artist. This obtained, he proceeded to the obscure lodgings of Dupré, at the unearthly hour of five in the morning, climbed to the sixth floor and pounded on the door!

Half asleep, the artist managed to stagger to the door, which he opened, to find a strange-looking person who announced himself as a marquis! The nobleman then and there proceeded to scold Dupré for certain characteristics of his work, emphasising his remarks with thrusts of his umbrella. Dupré regarded him as a lunatic and dressed as hurriedly as he

might, in order to escape. While this was going on, the man wandered about the bare chamber, looking at the sketches that were tacked upon the walls. With suddenness and quite without any change of his serious countenance, he demanded the price of the works. Hoping to get rid of his unwelcome visitor, Dupré announced that he could have any of them at twenty francs each. "I will take them all," said the marquis, and, to Dupré's astonishment, proceeded to draw a handful of gold from his pocket and deposit it on the one table Dupré possessed. This, it appears, was only the beginning of Dupré's good fortune and the kindness of the nobleman, who forthwith proceeded to give him some commissions and subsequently to bring him clients. It seems this patron was a sportsman who, devoted to the country, was a distinct lover of nature, and the sketches of Dupré had for him a great appeal, recalling scenes he had passed through while on the chase. Unfortunately, the name of this eccentric marquis has not been handed down to





Courtesy Scott & Fowles Co.

LANDSCAPE

DUPRÉ



Courtesy M. Knödler & Co.

LE COURS D'EAU

posterity, but he remained always a friend and patron.

With the first picture in the Salon of 1831, when he was but nineteen, Dupré met with the approbation of the critics. Unlike Rousseau, who was to feel so long the disapprobation of officialdom, Dupré, no less a man with radical departures in his work, seems never to have struggled with a similar opposition. He was given medals, and in 1849, when he was thirty-six, the decoration of the Legion of Honour, a distinction long withheld from Rousseau and that, when it came to Dupré, caused a breach between the friends. The second medal came to Dupré when he was but twenty-two years of age, in 1834; thus it will be seen that his honours arrived early. After this second medal, he went to England and painted much of the flat country lying to the west of Southampton, after which he went to Plymouth Sound, and from these places he brought back many admirable canvases. Dupré found himself drawn into a warm friendship with Rousseau, an in-

timacy that lasted several years. As early as 1833 they went sketching, and a few years later they decided to live together, making up a joint establishment that was presided over by the mother of Dupré, who made them very comfortable. So close were they, it is said no invitation was accepted that did not include both men.

Dupré, who seems to have been much the stronger personality of the two, although Rousseau was by far the greater artist, appears to have exercised a strong—almost a hypnotic—influence over the other and was instrumental in keeping him from over-elaborating his work, a tendency strong in Rousseau, who was apt to continue his efforts on his canvases to their final detriment. Together Dupré and Rousseau went about France, sketching and painting, to Landes on the Bay of Biscay, and to Isle-Adam where, in 1845, Rousseau painted his now famous *Hoar-frost*, which Dupré sold to the opera singer, Baroilhet, for one hundred dollars, a sum at the time very satisfactory to Rousseau.

Dupré always resented the unkindly action of juries in refusing the pictures of his friend Rousseau and was himself instrumental in organising a new art society, in company with such men as Decamps, Delacroix, Ary Scheffer, Charles Jacque, Daumier, and many more. It was, however, an organisation that did not last long, for the following year, with the advent of the new Republic, a change for the better came over French art affairs and the entire body of artists was invited not only to select its own jury for the exhibition, but to have this jury attend to the distribution of medals and other recompenses. This was a most radical departure, as hitherto the State had controlled the awarding of prizes. When the returns were in, it was seen that there had been elected to serve on this body, such up-to-date men as Corot, Dupré, Delacroix, Couture, and a number of others, to the horror of the more conservative element, and now the State gave both Rousseau and Dupré commissions at substantial sums.

All this was in 1848, but the next year was

to see many changes and a disrupting of the long friendship between Dupré and Rousseau. As far as one may judge, reading between the lines, it is evident that Rousseau was, to a certain extent, jealous of his friend—of Dupré's continued ability not only to sell, but to sell pictures upon which he spent but a small part of the time required by his more distinguished comrade. To the exhibition of the Salon of 1849 Rousseau sent three pictures, excellent works that attracted attention and secured for the artist a medal of the first class; but Dupré was given a still greater distinction, being on the list of the decoration of the Legion of Honour, from which Rousseau's name was missing. It was more than Rousseau could stand! He knew himself a greater artist than Dupré and he could not seem to get it out of his mind that there had been some underhand work, a deal of some sort, in which his name had been involved. The suspicions were absolutely unfounded as well as extremely unfair, for, on the contrary, Dupré had done all in his power to secure just treatment for his friend. In spite

of counsel, Rousseau persisted in his accusations, with the result that there was a break, the men separating after a hot quarrel. So distressed was Dupré that for three years he did not exhibit. Indeed, it is alleged that he did not even take up a brush for all that time, so did he brood over the unjust treatment.

The work that came from Dupré after that was marked by a greater sobriety, possibly by more poetry and thoughtfulness. It was somewhat less spontaneous though more robust. There came now those qualities of brown tones, characteristic of later work, with a thicker, heavier impasto. As a curious protest against this manner of painting, the jury reprimanded him in a singular way by awarding him again a second medal—they had given him this honour thirty years before and by all rights he was entitled to one of the first class, if any at all. Rousseau, it is only fair to state, though estranged from his former friend, worked hard, though unsuccessfully, to give him a first-class medal. So Dupré again withdrew from the exhibitions, this time hopelessly disgusted and

in great anger. The change, however, saw no diminution in his general popularity and he went on working in various parts of France until the Franco-German War of 1870. This found him fifty-eight years of age, too old to fight, and so he went to the coast of Normandy, where again he painted the sea, of which he was always very fond. He rendered this in a manner quite his own, with a breadth and charm most appealing if without the realism of the modern marine artist. There was solidity about his water, a certain opaqueness men avoid in these days, and there was lacking that knowledge of the anatomy of the wave the best men disclose to-day. Yet the result was attractive, if more decorative than convincing in a marine way, for he secured the majesty of the sea, with its grandeur and vastness.

From the seashore, after the conflict so disastrous to French arms, Dupré went back to river scenery along the Oise, and from there he returned to Barbizon, where he died on October 7, 1889. He seems in a measure to have been forgotten during the last years of his

life, and his death came as a surprise to the art world, who, classing him with the Barbizon coterie, were of the notion that he had died years before. Practically all of his friends were gone, for, with the exception of Charles Jacque, who was his junior by only two years, and who survived him five years, Dupré was the last of the group. When he was taken away, Troyon had been dead twenty-four years; Millet and Corot, fourteen; Diaz, thirteen, and Daubigny, eleven; while his old intimate, Rousseau, had been twenty-two years under the sod. All these good comrades, all these artists, he had struggled with, fought for, in whose company he had sketched, whose society he had enjoyed, and whose enthusiasms he had shared, were but memories, and yet, to the end, this old man of seventy-eight was painting with all the enthusiasm of youth, utterly absorbed in his profession, happy and contented, for, despite the quarrels and excitement of his earlier days, peace came at the end. Surrounded by a loving, devoted family, in which there never was a break and where all were assiduous in their at-

tentions to the delightful old painter, his declining years were full of joy. A daughter who was a capable musician played for him when the day's work was over; a loving wife kept intruders out of his studio; in a financial way he was at ease with the world, and his delight in his *metier* survived to the last. The twilight of his life was tender, peaceful, beautiful.

“Jules Dupré, a melancholy spirit, who was inwardly consumed by a lonely existence spent in passionate work,” says Muther, “stands as the Beethoven of modern painting, beside Corot, its Mozart. If Théodore Rousseau was the epic poet of the Fontainebleau school, and Corot the idyllic poet, Dupré seems its tragic dramatist. Rousseau's nature is hard, rude and indifferent to man. For Corot, God is the great philanthropist, who wishes to see men happy, and lets the spring come and the warm winds blow, only that children may have pleasure in them. His soul is, as Goethe has it in *Werther*, ‘as blithe as those of spring mornings.’ Jules Dupré has neither Rousseau's

reality nor Corot's tenderness; his tones are neither imperturbable nor subdued. In Corot there is a charm as of the light beating pinions of the *Zauberflöte*; in Dupré, the earth is struck by the shattering notes of the *Sinfonie Eroica*; Rousseau looks into the heart of nature with widely dilated pupils and a critical glance. Corot woos her smiling, caressing and dallying; Dupré courts her, uttering impassioned complaint and with tears in his eyes. In him are heard the mighty fugues of Romanticism. The trees live, the waves laugh and weep, the sky sings and wails, and the sun, like a great conductor, determines the harmony of the concert. Even the two pictures with which he made an appearance in the Salon of 1835, after he had left the Sèvres china manufactory and become acquainted with Constable during a visit to England—*The Environs of Southampton* and *Pasture-land in the Limousin*—displayed him an accomplished master.

"In the *Environs of Southampton* everything moved and moaned. Across an undulating country a dark tempest blusters, like a wild

host, hurrying and sweeping forward, gloomy, tearing everything along and scattering everything. It whirls leaves from the slender trees. Clouds big with rain hasten across the horizon, as if on a forced march. The whole landscape seems to partake of the flight; the brushwood seems to bow its head, like a traveller. In the background, a few figures are recognisable; people who have been overtaken by the storm at their work; horses with their manes flying in the wind; and a rider seeks refuge for himself and his beast. A swampy stretch of water ruffles its waves as though it were frowning. Everything is alive and quaking in this majestic solitude, and in the mingled play of confused lights, hurrying clouds, fluttering branches, and trembling grass.

“*Pasture-land in the Limousin* had the same overpowering energy; it was an admirable picture in 1835, and it is admirable still. The fine old trees stand like huge pillars; the grass, drenched with rain, is of an intense green: nature seems to shudder as if in fever. And through his whole life Dupré retained the lyri-

cal fever of Romanticism. As the last champion of Romanticism he bore the banner of the proud generation of 1830 through well-nigh two generations, and, until his death in 1889, stood on the ground where Paul Huet had first placed French landscape; but Huet attained his pictorial effects by combining and calculation, while Dupré is always a great, true, and convincing poet.

“Every evening he was seen in L’Isle-Adam, where he settled in 1849, wandering across the fields alone, even when a torrent of rain came hissing down upon the ground. One of his pupils declares that once, when they stood at night on the bridge of the Oise, during a storm, Dupré broke into a paroxysm of tears at the magnificent spectacle. He was a fanatic rejoicing in storms, one who watched the tragedies of the heavens with quivering emotion, a passionate spirit consumed by his inward force, and, like his literary counterpart, Victor Hugo, he sought beauty of landscape only where it was wild and magnificent. He is the painter of nature vexed and harassed, and of the ma-

jestic silence that follows the storm. The theme of his pictures is at one time the whirling torture of the yellow leaves, which the wind drives before it and which sweep eddying confusedly together, tormented and quivering cleave to the furrows in the mad chase, fall into dykes, and cling against the trunks of trees, to find refuge from their persecutor. At another time he paints how the night wind whistles around an old church, and whirls the screaming weather-cock round and round, rattles with an invisible hand against the doors and moans, forces its way through the windows, and, once shut in its stony prison, seeks a way out again, howling and wailing. He paints sea-pieces. There the sea rages and mutters like some hoarse old monster: the colour of the water is dirty and pallid; the howling multitude of the waves storm on like an innumerable army before which every human power gives way. Stones torn loose are scattered with a shrill crash upon the shore. The clouds are dull and ghostly, here resembling the smoke of charcoal, there of a shining whiteness, and swollen as



THE OLD OAK
DUPRÉ.



RETURN OF THE FLOCK
DUPRÉ



Courtesy M. Knodler & Co.

RETURN FROM THE FIELD
DU'PRÉ

though they must burst. He celebrates the commotion of the sky, nature in her angry majesty, and the most brilliant phenomena of atmospheric life. Rousseau's highest aim was to avoid painting for effect, and Corot cared only for grace of tone; a picture of his consists only of 'a little grey and a certain *je ne sais quoi*.'

"Jules Dupré is peculiarly the colour poet of the group, and sounds the most resonant notes in the romantic concert. His light does not beam in gently vibrating silver tones, but is concentrated in glaring red suns. Beside the flaming hues of evening red, he paints the darkest shadows. He revels in contrasts. His favourite key of colour is that of a ghostly sunset, against which a gnarled oak or the dark sail of a tiny vessel rises like a phantom. Trembling and yet with ardent desire, he looks at the tumult of waters, and hears the roll and resonance of the moon-silvered tide. He delights in night, rain, and storm. Corot's gentle rivulets become a rolling and whirling flood in his pictures, a headlong stream carry-

ing all before it. The wind no longer sighs, but blusters across the valley in devastation. The clouds which in Corot are silvery and gentle, like white lambs, are in Dupré black and threatening, like demons of hell. In Corot, the soft morning breeze faintly agitates the tender clouds in the sky; in Dupré a damp, cold wind of evening blows a spectral grey mist into the valley, and the hurricane tears asunder the thunderclouds."

In 1834, when Dupré went to England, he had the wonderful satisfaction of meeting personally the great English painter, John Constable. It is hardly possible to estimate the delight that must have ensued when the young Frenchman saw in the flesh this distinguished artist who meant so much to him and his confrères, for the Barbizon school was largely a consequence of Constable and his art. Constable had been the first to free himself from every stereotyped rule and was an influence in France, though the English had been slow to accept him. The French had given him a gold

medal in Paris, where his pictures had been greatly acclaimed, and from him may be said to have sprung modern landscape painting. Delacroix himself affirmed this as far back as 1854, in an article he wrote for the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and the period from 1827 to 1830, says Muther, showed the birth-throes of French landscape painting. In 1831 it was born, for in that year, forever marked in the annals of French, and indeed of European, art, there appeared together in the Salon for the first time, all those young artists who are now honoured as the greatest in the century. All, or almost all, were children of Paris, the sons of small townsmen, or of humble artisans; all were born in the old quarter of the city, or in its suburbs, in the midst of a desolate wilderness of houses, and were destined for that very reason to be great landscape painters.

When Dupré met Constable, in the year 1834, the English master was fifty-eight years of age and had just painted his now famous *Valley Farm*, sometimes known as *Willy Lot's*

House, which is now in the National Gallery, in London. It went to the Royal Academy of that year.

Constable had been very sick in the spring with rheumatic fever. Three years later he was to die. Dupré survived him fifty-two years—more than half a century; but to the end, the memory of that visit and his talks with the great man remained pleasant souvenirs. One can well understand how the young, struggling artist of twenty-three looked on the *arrivé* thirty-seven years his senior, with reverence and intense admiration, and felt himself in an atmosphere of real art, in the presence of a man who had succeeded in doing the things for which he was struggling with all his soul. For Constable was the first landscape painter who really saw effects of light and air and learned to paint them. He was the first to embody the impression of a mood of light with feeling, without lingering on the reproduction of those details which are perceptible only to the analytical eye. So Dupré met and talked with the

great man and returned to his native land inspired more than ever.

“Dupré’s art,” says Louis Hourticq, the Director of Fine Arts in the city of Paris, in his review of *Art in France*, “was vigorous. He was not content merely to record an episodic, curious, or amusing effect; he did not scatter his attention by rendering the grass, the moss and the little branches with too great particularity. He composes strongly, and sacrifices a host of details to a robust general effect; his large masses are well placed, the most brilliant lights in the centre, the whole solid and compact. Beside the contrast of light, the plays of colour are pushed to an extreme. In his fat impasto, we divine, as in the works of Decamps, a complicated chemistry, learned combinations by means of which the utmost is won from colour. In his thick colour, deep greens merge into russet tones, with a strong yet gentle effect, as in the autumn woods. The sketch from nature was transformed in the studio; a tree, a house, a flock of sheep, the sim-

ple realistic motive was amplified and isolated, till it took on an august majesty; an exact study of landscape soon became a romantic scene."

A most uneven painter was Dupré, inspired it seemed at times, at others almost commonplace. Now and then his compositions were really splendid. I recall one of some oxen drawing a hay-wagon across a meadow, with men on either side. It is most complete in every way, and beautifully composed, possessing really master qualities. But many of his pictures are rearrangements of out-of-door sketches, obviously composed in his studio, of the sort he knew would meet favour with the public; attractive it is true, but quite lacking the convincing qualities of a Rousseau, or a Diaz even, and entirely without the variety of those artists. He used his pigment very liberally, scraping, I imagine, when it was quite dry, and perhaps glazing. Thus he obtained rich qualities at the expense of truth, where both Rousseau and Diaz would have secured more subtlety, and, toward the end of his career, he

was inclined to a monotony in a colour way. As has been said, he was more dramatic than lyric, but he was a distinct personality and this personality was impressed on everything he painted, so he will always remain one of the most entertaining members of the Barbizon group. Occasionally he rose to very high flights.

In his *Notes on Certain Masters*, the late Albert Wolff, the French art critic, thus describes from personal observation the home of Jules Dupré: "In the vicinity of Parmain, where of old the little boy bent over his dishes, the great artist is now always found working in the consummation of his career. The illustrious landscape painter is only separated from the village which was his artistic cradle, by the current of the Oise. The prospect from his windows is a mass of souvenirs; every hour the enthusiasms of adolescence return to the soul of the master painter, and pay in their account of the courageous and honest impulses derived from his earliest years. The house at Isle-Adam is but a modest, or at best a comfortable

one, with middle-class conveniences, but no tinsel: the great ornament of the property is the name of the owner. Everything is arranged in this refuge of a great artist to facilitate home-life, work, and rest. No noise of the street disturbs the painter at his incessant labour. The family, tender and attentive to his slightest wish, waits to gather round him at his hour of rest; often a friend comes to sit at his hospitable board, and then, when Jules Dupré has lighted his pipe, there is familiar conversation; or rather, the master talks and the rest listen, for the whole interest centres in his recollections. It is the glorious names of the men of 1830, as they are called, which forms the capital of the talk. The lively intelligence of the old artist seems to grow boyish again in the sparkle of these confidences. Then we see the whole procession—Delacroix, Rousseau, Diaz, Corot, Barye, Millet, Decamps and Troyon; that is as much as to say, the quintessence of the artistic glory of our century. Now, during the recital of the hard commencement, Dupré's singularly

blue eye seems to light up with the light of battle; now the voice softens, and his thoughts seem to float off in a gentle melancholy toward the impenetrable mystery whither his friends have preceded this last survivor of the proud Pleiad of 1830.

“On the walls hang a few souvenirs of these noble friends, especially, among others, the magnificent drawings of Théodore Rousseau, and a superb canvas by Corot, bought by Dupré out of his savings, and from which he has never been able to part, though in receipt of offers of fifty thousand francs. But not only is Jules Dupré the last survivor of the illustrious group, he was their precursor. He indicated first in modern art the return to the eternal source of nature. His admiration for these lost comrades is so sincere that he will not allow himself to be called their chief; before posterity they form his equals, but in the past it was he who showed the way. . . . It was,” continues M. Wolff, “the Duke de Nemours who bought the first picture sent to the Salon by Jules Dupré. The sale made a

great noise; this son of a king paid twelve hundred francs for the work; for the young painter it was substantially the assurance of a fortune, and at the same time the official consecration of a career. The revolution of February sent the Duke into exile. The third republic gave him his country again. Among the first visitors who came to present their respects to the Duke, on his return to France, was Jules Dupré. They looked at each other for some moments, to measure the time passed since their separation by each other's wrinkled foreheads and whitened hairs.

“‘Monseigneur,’ said the artist, with emotion, ‘I can never forget that my first encouragement came from your royal highness.’

“‘I still keep your picture,’ answered the prince. ‘Let us come and see it.’ The canvas was, in fact, found in the Duchess’ salon. In this room the Duke, taking the artist’s arm, said: ‘Your art is happier than either of us, for it has not grown old.’” Perhaps no one save a Frenchman would have thought of so graceful a thing to say. Not the least charm

of the speech was its truth. Dupré's art does not grow old—no good art ever does, for that matter.

“Once, when Albert Wolff was visiting the painter, a dealer came in to buy a picture and rather insisted that an unfinished canvas be completed during the afternoon, that he might take it back to town with him. To the artist's protest that it was out of the question, the merchant pleaded that with Dupré's sureness of hand and eye, acquired by long years of practice, the matter was easy enough. Then the master rose in his indignation. In Wolff's presence he replied: “You think, then, that I know my profession? Why, my poor fellow, if I had nothing more to find out and to learn, I could not paint any longer.”

“In these words,” adds M. Wolff, “is his whole life of search and study. Truly the day when self-doubt should vanish from an artist's mind, the day when he should not feel before his canvas the trouble which throws the brain into fever, on that day he would be no better than a workman taking up in the morning the

task of the evening before, plodding and without hesitation, but also without nobility. The day when Jules Dupré should open his studio without a thrill and leave it without discouragement, he would consider that he had arrived at the end of what he could do—and he would be right.” Sixty years of labour had not spoiled the great artist!

CONSTANT TROYON
1810–1865

V

CONSTANT TROYON

THESE were two bachelors in the group of the Barbizon Painters. We have referred to the celibacy of dear old "Papa" Corot, who, though he never married, and so had no children of his own, was the beloved vicarious parent of every one who came under his sway. The second bachelor was Constant Troyon, the most distinguished of modern animal painters, who, curiously enough, did not seriously attack the rendering of these animals until he was forty years of age and had already made a reputation as a painter of the landscape. A writer remarked that Troyon has no art biography, for he never had any systematic teaching at home, never went to the *École des Beaux Arts*, won no *Prix de Rome*, never went to Italy as a student, and never painted a picture with a distinguishing title by which the world re-

members him. One may not write poems to such titles as *Landscape and Cattle*, *Cattle in Woodland*, *The Road*, *Cows in Pasture*, and the like, and yet, with such simple names, the man turned out masterpieces, virile representations of cows, horses, sheep, and dogs, than which none had done better and few as well.

Troyon was one of three of the Barbizon group to get his first start in painting in the porcelain works at Sèvres, the others being Jules Dupré and Narcisse Diaz. There, too, he made their acquaintance, which was afterward cemented by his frequent trips to the village of Barbizon, though little of his work was done in that place. Still, he is ever associated with the coterie of the Men of Thirty and as such he must receive consideration. He was born, then, at Sèvres, August 28, 1810, where his father was employed in the porcelain works and where he had lodgings in more or less humble capacity as general workman. When Constant was very young, he entered the shops to begin his career as a decorator of porcelains under the supervision of his father.

A decorative painter, one Riocreux, was then doing the flower work on the porcelain and doing it most skilfully. Interested in the lad, when Riocreux later was made Keeper of the Sèvres Museum, he gave Troyon a few desultory lessons, lessons of probably modest value, more in the direction of teaching the boy how to handle his materials. The friendship with Dupré and Diaz was of far greater import to him, for the three used to exchange ideas and build high hopes for the future. At twenty, we find Troyon quitting the works and starting out for himself, occasionally doing a little porcelain decoration, but more frequently sketching before nature. One day he met with an artist named Camille Roqueplan, a fairly equipped man known as a painter of romantic landscapes, from whom he gained some suggestions tending to broaden his manner of work, for at the porcelain factory he had developed along lines of a somewhat fatigued detail.

With the suggestions received from these two men, Riocreux and Roqueplan, ends all the art education Troyon ever received, save

through his own application before nature. He seems to have been a man of enormous energy, working constantly, early and late, studying with rare intelligence, ever searching to improve himself; and the result was he forged steadily onward. Now, on the advice of Roqueplan, he went to Paris and established himself in a studio there. This was in 1832 when he was twenty-four years of age, and he sent a picture to the Salon which was well received, attracting the attention of the jury. Three years later, they gave him a medal of the third class. His first exhibits were in the nature of recollections of Sèvres. He depicted a *fête* there, a well known mansion, and a view of the park at St. Cloud, all landscapes, for as yet he had not attempted animals. In Paris, he immediately became one of the famous circle of revolutionary young men who were to make art history, and there began his intimacy with Rousseau, Millet, and others of the Barbizon Painters. We find no trace of discouraging struggles against poverty, none of the hopeless lack of appreciation that beset so many of

his friends. On the contrary, Troyon seems to have made enough always to support his modest needs and to enable him to go on with his work comfortably, for he appears to have travelled where his fancy led him and there are accounts of trips to Normandy, Holland, and about France generally.

Meanwhile he was successful with what he did in an official way, for he received a medal of the second class in 1840, and one of the first class in 1846, while in 1849 he secured the Cross of the Legion of Honour, which would appear to spell reasonable success for a man of thirty-nine. When the decoration of the Legion of Honour came to him, there was a great demand for his work and he was enabled to increase his prices, so that he found himself financially quite independent.

It is recorded that he turned his attention to painting cattle at about this time, after a visit to Holland, where he saw and was impressed with the famous *Bull* by Paul Potter. From then on, his course was decided. Studiously and with remarkable application, did he

pursue the study of animals, and with each new work he further impressed the critics and the public with his capacity. So there followed a procession of pictures, all of the most simple nature. They might almost be called the chronicles of the farm, for Troyon showed canvas after canvas of pastoral scenes, homely, intimate, realistic, disclosing rare powers of observation and execution, with a fine grasp of artistic requirements. Thus, too, a painter does his best with the things most familiar to his eyes, the things he knows intimately and that hold his sympathy. So we have a group of cattle under the trees of a nearby woodland quietly chewing the cud, beneath the shadows of fine oaks, the sunlight flecking them here and there as it escapes through the foliage; again, down a road comes a young peasant girl on the back of a donkey, with a flock of sheep following her as she is attended by the faithful dog; and you are convinced of the truth and the sincerity of the presentation. Again, perhaps a hay cart drawn by oxen crosses a ford, and once more we have a charming disposition



Courtesy M. Knoedler & Co.

COWS RESTING
TROY ON



Courtesy M. Knoedler & Co.



Courtesy M. Knodler & Co.

GOING TO MARKET TROYON



Courtesy Scott & Fowler Co.

THE SHEPHERD TROYON

of light and shade, an agreeable pictorial arrangement of masses admirably disposed; for the man was pre-eminently a picture maker and knew unerringly not only what to put on his canvas but, better still, what to leave out, a valuable matter with a picture maker.

You may not look at the animal compositions by Troyon without being strangely impressed by his splendid rendering of forms, his fine sense of composition, for here he was a past master. He painted sheep quite as well as he did cattle and he painted dogs possibly best of all, though it is as a cattle painter on which his chief fame rests.

The American cattle painter, William H. Howe, writing of Troyon, says: "A few years ago, while sketching in the Forest of Fontainebleau, I learned much regarding Troyon and his fondness for dogs from an old man who, in Troyon's time, was the lodge-keeper of the royal kennels. He informed me that he had posed many times for Troyon, and he described several of his well-known works for which he had served as a model, one of

which, I well remember, was sold in the Secretan collection sale in Paris, and was, I believe, subsequently brought to the United States. This work represents a forester wearing a blue blouse, surrounded by a group of hunting-dogs in leash, a most worthy example, full of colour, strong in light and shade, and the animals well rendered, both in life and action. The old man was simply wrapped up in fond remembrance of his friend, and had a way of saying, 'Troyon was a jolly old boy,' and again, 'Those were jolly old days,' and, 'Those other chaps, Millet, Diaz, and Rousseau, used to get together at night-time and make the hours merry with their jokes and boyish pranks.' Troyon, he told me, would get up at all hours of the night and keep everybody else awake playing with the dogs. He was greatly attached to his dogs, and they were his constant companions at all times."

The curious part of it all is that Troyon won all the official honours that ever came to him—and they were all a painter could expect, for that matter, comprising all the medals the

Salon offers and the Legion of Honour—not with his animal pictures, but with his landscapes! One may see, however, in his later work where he used these landscapes simply as backgrounds, that they are full of distinction. He knew his landscape anatomy and construction thoroughly, painting with authority, breadth and artistic vision. Mr. Howe further says: “Troyon’s genius is to-day plainly recognised, not only in the country of his birth, but in England, Holland, Germany, and America. No cattle painter of his day or of the present time can claim such wide-spread recognition. People may rave as they please about Paul Potter’s *Young Bull* at The Hague—to my mind, a greatly over-rated picture, though deserving of much praise as a careful study of a young bull—but Potter as an animal painter was never the equal of Troyon. He could paint isolated objects with harsh truth, but he never could gain the whole, the ensemble of things, as compared with Troyon. He could paint cow-hides and cow anatomy with some precision, but Troyon could

and did paint cow life. Albert Cuyp could give the truth of a cow's skeleton, the rack of bones and members, with exceptional force, but Troyon in painting cow character—the clumsy, wet-nosed, heavy-breathing bovine—was vastly his superior. Again, Landseer could humanise dogs and other animals, giving them a sentiment quite opposite to their nature, but Troyon never distorted or sentimentalised in any such way. He told the truth. The timidity of sheep, the gentleness of cattle, the watchfulness of dogs, were outer manifestations of their animal natures, and these he gave with shrewd knowledge, and yet simply, quickly, and without the painter's pedantry, from which we suffer so much in these days. It has been said he was the most sympathetic painter of this century. It may be added that in the painting of animals and their homes he was the greatest painter of this or any other century."

When Troyon came on the field as an animal painter, the two foremost men in Europe at that work were Belgians—Koekkoek and Ver-



Courtesy M. Knoedler & Co.

THREE COWS

boekhoven—and their treatment of cattle, sheep, and dogs was puerile indeed; theirs was a finical art in which the childish, pitiful finish took away all the life which existed to a certain extent in the original design. “Fancy,” says Albert Wolff, “the astonishment at the sight of Troyon’s animals, with their large life, their broad brushwork, in deep, pure colours, studied with a discriminating sympathy for every race and species, and moving through landscapes of a master’s creation. These were not the fashionable stuffed beasts, but living, moving herds, stretching themselves luxuriously in the sun, breathing the cool of morning, or huddling close together at the approach of the storm.”

So great an art authority as Richard Muther, keeper of the New Pinakothek at Munich, places Troyon unhesitatingly in the foremost rank. He says: “It was only when the landscape school of Fontainebleau had initiated a new method of vision, feeling, and expression that France produced a new great painter of animals. As Dupré and Rousseau tower over their predecessors Cabat and Flandrin in

landscape, so Constant Troyon rises above Brascassat in animal painting. In the latter there may be found a scrupulous, pedantic observation, in union with a thin, polished, academic, and carefully arranged style of painting; in the former, a large and broad harmony with wild nature, and a directness and force of intuition without a parallel in the history of art. Brascassat belongs to the same category as Denner; Troyon to that of Frans Hals and Beouwer. . . . He first found his own powers when he made the acquaintance of Théodore Rousseau and Jules Dupré and immigrated with them into the Forest of Fontainebleau. At the headquarters of the new school his ideas underwent a revolution. . . . In 1855 . . . he painted *Oxen Going to Their Work*, that mighty picture in the Louvre, which displays him in the zenith of his creative powers. Till then, no animal painter had rendered with such combined strength and actuality the long, heavy gait, the philosophical indifference, and the quiet resignation of cattle, the poetry of autumnal light, and the mist of morning rising

lightly from the earth and veiling the whole land with grey, silvery hues. The deeply furrowed smoking field makes an undulating ascent, so that one seems to be looking at the horizon over the broad face of the earth.

Troyon is perhaps not so correct as Potter, nor so lucid as Albert Cuyp, but he is more forcible and impressive than either. No one has ever seized the poetry of these heavy masses of flesh, with their strong colour and largeness of outline, as he has done. What places him far above the old painters is his fundamental power as a landscapist, a power unequalled except in Rousseau. His landscapes have always the smell of the earth, and they smack of rusticity. At one time he paints the atmosphere, veiling the contours of objects with a light mist recalling Corot, and yet saturated with clear sunshine; at another he sends his heavy, fattened droves in the afternoon across field-paths bright in the sunlight and dark green meadows, or places them beneath a sky where dense thunderclouds are swiftly rolling up. Troyon is no poet, but a born painter, be-

longing to the irrepressibly forceful family of Jordaens and Courbet, a *maître peintre* of strength and plastic genius, as healthy as he is splendid in colour. His *Cow Scratching Herself* and his *Return to the Farm* will always be counted among the most forceful animal pictures of all ages. For a long time Troyon's works were held by *amateurs* to be wanting in finish. They did not acknowledge to themselves that "finish" in artistic creations is, after all, only a work of patience, rather industrial than artistic, and at bottom invented for the purpose of enticing half-trained connoisseurs. . . . Troyon is a strong master who suffers no rivals. His landscapes, with their deep verdure, their powerful animals and their skies traversed by heavy clouds, are the embodiment of power."

Troyon had but one pupil, Émile van Marcke. Half a Belgian, he was a capable man, who yet never approximated the greatness of his master, but who was nevertheless most successful and was much esteemed in his

day and is now eagerly sought after by the collector. Van Marcke died in 1890.

It is difficult in these days of advanced art notions, of continual departures and changes, to comprehend what radical changes meant in the time of these Barbizon painters, when revolt against the academic spelled utter withdrawal of official patronage and recompense, if not complete artistic ostracism so far as the Salon was concerned. And even when, through the favour of the jury, pictures were admitted and the artists composing that body voted a recompense, the officials, the Minister of the Fine Arts and the chiefs of bureaus, stood their ground and resented change. It is told of Troyon that, when the Minister of Fine Arts was handed the list of decorations and found Troyon's name thereon he remarked sadly, "It appears decidedly that I know nothing about painting." Yet he signed the order and Troyon secured his red ribbon. The canvas that forced this bauble was, singularly enough, not a cattle piece, but a landscape pure

and simple, called *The Windmill*, in which were seen the influences of Rembrandt whom Troyon had studied.

We have mentioned Troyon's material success, and it may be added that he enjoyed both the patronage and the friendship of the Emperor Napoleon III, whose favour of course was of great financial advantage. There are not wanting accounts of the man's happy disposition and kindness of attitude to all his friends. He was of a powerful physical build, too, which enabled him to work in the open and make long excursions to his subjects. I have said he never married, but it is recorded he was a devoted son to his mother who, in turn, repaid that devotion by the greatest concern in his welfare, and her good deeds to the young men who followed in his footsteps, for she survived him some time. Under these circumstances it is disconcerting to read in an account by the distinguished French writer on art, the late Albert Wolff, that Troyon had been most unsuccessful in his youth and had suffered the pangs of poverty; that in his old age, bitterness

became one of his habits, and that his death comparatively young—at fifty-five—was because he indulged himself immoderately with the joys of life; that he worked too hard and tormented himself too much; and that he was continually carrying conversation back to his days of penury. Truth is surely at the bottom of a deep well. It is hard to get at facts. Here is a man dead scarcely fifty years and the story of his life is in confusion. The preponderance of testimony, however—and fortunately—is toward a reasonably happy, normal life; and certainly it is much more pleasant thus to dwell on the history of Constant Troyon.

Troyon was a most interesting painter whose simplicity of attack was in strange contradistinction to the prevailing method of working of his day. He saw things in an elemental way, got at the large side of nature, and the result was a forceful, convincing rendering that made a strong appeal. It was so healthy an art, so individual and so altogether virile, that he caught the spectator immediately. While

he bothered himself not at all with detail, when he had completed his composition, one felt there was all the finish necessary, all the parts being nicely brought together with a consummate skill and an intelligent grasp of pictorial needs. He secured surfaces in an extraordinary manner, whether they were the hide of an animal, or merely the appearance of a fallen tree-trunk. Bigness was the word to use in connection with his work. The way in which he would indicate the blue blouse of a peasant driving home his sheep, or his manner of indicating the wool of these animals, his suggestive presentation of a load of hay on a cart, or the shimmer of sunlight on meadow, all were the work of a master, one who knew his theme and felt it in an unmistakable way. Indeed, he was an object lesson for the painter, for never did he seem for a moment to waste his time in the unnecessary consideration of unimportant parts of his pictures. His compositions, too, were of delightful arrangement and balance, of full realisation of what properly constitutes a picture. In his most simple efforts, the interest was thoroughly

sustained, thoroughly carried out, and all with extraordinary directness.

Troyon's long experience at the landscape, too, enabled him to give to his backgrounds for animals and figures an equal authority, an equal charm of rendering. Here he was no less past master, painting with great ability, with sense of fitness, and with thorough consideration for the environment. Through the years his colours have held with only a slight tendency to darken, and while he came before the Impressionist had made progress, intuitively he seemed to feel the need of broken pigment, securing delicacy, brilliancy, and vibrancy that make his work to-day hold its own with the latest developments. In short, he was the genuine artist, a painter by the grace of God, and he never faltered in his enthusiasm. It is charged that he worked at times for the dealers, that is, that he allowed certain canvases to go out that were not up to his highest standards; but it is likely that he permitted some of his sketches to be bought by the picture merchants, as many a successful artist has

done before him. I myself have seen certain quick impressions in the shops, made by Troyon perhaps in an afternoon. This, however, signifies nothing. Such as I saw were worthy when considered simply as sketches; and only as such should they be considered. I know of no artist whose work discloses a more genuine love of nature, a more honest effort to get her moods and phases, and to paint for the pure love of painting. His are canvases that show enthusiasm in the making, an enthusiasm that in the end becomes contagious, for the spectator seems to enter with Troyon into all the charm of the woodland, the plains, or the beauty of skies and hills. His work has that enduring quality that will stand the test of time. In short, he was a master. His work has those characteristics of the master, qualities that are independent of schools, fashions and conventions, for they are builded on the solid foundation of eternal truth.

PIERRE ÉTIENNE THÉODORE
ROUSSEAU
1812–1867

VI

THÉODORE ROUSSEAU

LET into a great rock, in a secluded spot in the depths of the Forest of Fontainebleau, by the cowherd's path, near the little village of Barbizon, is a fine medallion bronze relief containing the portraits of two famous artists who have reflected such glory on France—Jean François Millet, and Pierre Étienne Théodore Rousseau. It is the work of the distinguished French sculptor Chapu and is the loving tribute of the fellow painters of these two great craftsmen, to commemorate their long life in this small hamlet where for years they went their artistic way and produced the masterpieces that have since placed their names in the galaxy of the world's nobility of art. It is with the second named that we have to do here, he who was better known simply as Théodore Rousseau. This man, the great-

est modern master of landscape work, was born in Paris in 1812, and died in Barbizon fifty-five years later, on December 22, 1867.

It is a curious fact that so many great creators come from the most humble origin, from surroundings little calculated to produce men of deep thought and grand impulses. In the case of Rousseau, it was a tailor's son who was destined to occupy so important a place in art. Yet Rousseau was not without something of an artistic ancestry in a way. An uncle had been a portrait painter, how distinguished we are not told, but there is a legend that, because of his deep sensibility in having seen a signboard painted by one of his fellow students, he fled from a land where one could sink so low, and died an exile in India! Furthermore, there was a cousin of his mother who was a landscape painter, a man famous for introducing donkeys in his pictures. To this relative Rousseau went in his early youth for advice—and also because there he had a chance to play with the artist's palette at the close of the painting day when some pigment remained thereon; and

there, also, he made a few copies of works that hung on the walls of the studio. Farther back, we are told of Rousseau's great-grandfather who had been "Gilder of the King's Equipages," a berth bringing that worthy into close association with the painters of his majesty's household, where it is presumed he picked up some slight familiarity with artists' ways and tastes.

From his studies at a small school at Auteuil, at the early age of twelve, Rousseau was taken and made secretary to the owner of a string of sawmills in the forests of the *Franche-Comté* and so, at a tender and formative age, when a lad begins to obtain impressions of his kind, when his mind begins gradually to unfold through association with his studies, Rousseau found himself in the deep woodlands, almost with a man's commercial responsibility, a responsibility however that did not prevent him from forming deep impressions of nature, of making serious studies of tree forms, of light and shade, for those were the things that made the appeal, not the keeping of accounts, of

books, of the various details incidental to the successful carrying on of a large business enterprise. But in a short time, this patron, a certain Maire by name, failed—perhaps because of his entrusting important matters to so youthful an aid. Rousseau came home and returned once more to school. Yet the year's experience had been of an unexpected value. One can imagine a dreamy youth, full of art projects, wandering at all hours of the day and perhaps the night, in the solitude of those almost trackless forests, storing his receptive mind with nature's facts, instinctively making compositions, analysing colour relations, seeing the grandeur and the splendour of the themes spread all about him.

Somewhere about 1826, then, when Rousseau was fourteen, he had so impressed the family with his real bent in an artistic direction and had made a sketch so full of promise, that all doubt was removed as to his future and the father took steps to start him properly. The landscape-painting cousin was called into the family councils and young Rousseau went to

Compeigne with him to make copies as well as drawings from nature. So well done were these that the cousin placed Rousseau under one Rémond, a landscape painter of the classic school who later for a brief while was to become the master of Fromentin. It was an unfortunate choice, apparently, for Rousseau himself complains that it took him a number of years to get rid of the influences of this unsympathetic person with whom he remained nevertheless several years. Rémond in the meanwhile endeavoured to persuade the youth to make the competition for the *Prix de Rome*, but happily the youth rebelled, not only at this, but at the work of the studio, going instead to the Louvre where he copied older masters, or wandering in the woods and sketching before nature in his own way.

This was a way, however, that did not find favour with the authorities. For the realism of Rousseau the older men had little use, and the "romantic" movement then stirring up the younger generation met with their stern disapproval as well as with their serious opposition.

All this concerned Rousseau little, if any. Studying seriously before nature, impressed with the work of the best of the older masters, the youth felt a desire to work along certain well defined lines. Nor was he without great confidence in himself. So at eighteen, he shook off the shackles of the school and made his way alone to the mountain district of Auvergnat, in the Vantal mountains, a wild region full of the most dramatic, even tragic, themes, with waterfalls and roaring cataracts, with lovely valleys and great overpowering hills, with enormous rocks, in short, a volcanic region that straightway appealed to him and kept him entranced for more than a year.

When Rousseau returned with his sketches and pictures and showed them to his master Rémond, he was told they were the work of delirium. On the other hand, Ary Scheffer, the Dutch-German-Frenchman, a popular artistic idol at that time in Paris, was delighted with the work. He hung a number of them in his studio and pointed them out to all who came to him as works of a most original and incisive tal-

ent. These, it must be recalled, were the efforts of a lad of nineteen. And thus it was that Rousseau began to be looked upon as the champion of the younger scholars of Romanticism. Those were days when art discussions ran high, when there was a battle royal of the schools, when it might be that there was discussion as to whom the young insurgents should follow, but none in the least regarding whom they should not follow. It was a time of heated discussions and Rousseau, despite his extreme youth, was one of the champions of the new movement, the newer school of 1830 of which Delacroix and Géricault were the leaders. These revolutionary men used to frequent a *café* on the *rue du Faubourg St. Denis*, known as the *Cheval Blanc*, and there were nightly discussions, for in France nothing is achieved without much talk and strong opposition. Yet Rousseau, though heart and soul with these anarchists in art, was not a great talker and in those days he was known as "*Père Tranquille*." His method of protest against the academic was rather to paint in a different

manner, so different a manner, indeed, that he brought down on his head the wrath of the official powers and for many years he was practically an exile from the Salon in Paris.

It is a strange story, that of the enmity directed toward this master, which endured so long a time—twelve years in all—after the young man had been honoured with a third medal early in his career. It seems that Rousseau formed a strong friendship with Théophile Thoré, a well known art critic and general writer for the papers, but above all a man with strong revolutionary tendencies, that were manifested in his journalistic work and got him in trouble with the authorities; and the intimacy of Rousseau with this man, as well as with a little group connected with a journal called *La Liberté*, did him harm in the eyes of the authorities. At any rate, Rousseau seems to have been a marked man and was the subject of endless and annoying prosecution for many years, disclosing itself mainly in the rejection of his Salon pictures, and the withholding of all official honours. Few painters of distinc-

tion have been the subject of such continuous rejection as was Rousseau, the more astonishing when one sees his superb canvases that were regularly turned down by the juries. Finally, among his colleagues there was bestowed a name on Rousseau, that of "*Le Grand Refusé*," which really became one of great honour.

Rousseau's first visit to Barbizon, as far as can be learned, was in 1833. Of course, he was a welcome addition to the small colony already established there, and it was in the Forest of Fontainebleau, the next season, that he painted his *Côtes de Granville*, which secured him a third medal at the Salon and was the last canvas hung there for twelve years. Muther says this fine work might well serve as a triumphal title-page of all his work. Meanwhile this constant rejection of pictures not only greatly discouraged and exasperated the painter, but took away the market for the sale of his work and at times he was in severe straits for the necessities of life. It even curtailed his trips to Barbizon. Fortunately, however, with the aid of his father, he was able to resume these

between 1837 and 1840, when he made some admirable pictures and learned to love the place more and more.

A very warm intimacy sprang up between Rousseau and his fellow painter, Jules Dupré, which, unfortunately, was not destined to endure to the end, though while it lasted it was to give to both great satisfaction in the interchange of ideas and the *camaraderie* of their congenial occupation. They lived side by side in Paris and frequently went off to the country sketching together.

By 1843, Rousseau was perhaps at his best as a painter, and from then on his work was a succession of real masterpieces, works destined to stand the great test of time, though they sold only occasionally then, and at very modest sums. Generally, too, his place in art was fully acknowledged by such as were qualified to judge. Dupré, by reason of his lively interest in Rousseau's work, now became of great service to his friend, by taking the canvases away from him that he might not over-elaborate them, an unfortunate tendency Rousseau

always had. The privilege of their intimate friendship permitted Dupré to speak plainly to Rousseau when necessary to convince him of his error. At any rate, much good was thus accomplished and many a canvas saved. Dupré also interested himself in efforts to dispose of Rousseau's pictures, with a fair measure of success.

Somewhere about this time Rousseau had an unfortunate love experience. He had been on the point of marrying an estimable young woman when a misunderstanding arose and the affair was broken off. He was, alas, destined to have a still more unfortunate experience with the sex, that was to be the tragedy of his life, for the woman with whom he was later to cast his lot and with whom he was to live till her death became not only an invalid on his hands but a hopeless maniac. Fortunately there were no children to further complicate matters for, though Rousseau seems to have been devoted to the young woman, who was a native of the *Franche-Comté*, there had never been any church ceremony. They lived to-

gether, however, with harmony and she seems to have been, when her health permitted, of assistance to him and entirely devoted to his interests. She was always referred to as his wife and through all her dreadful illness and subsequent misery, his attachment was very fine indeed.

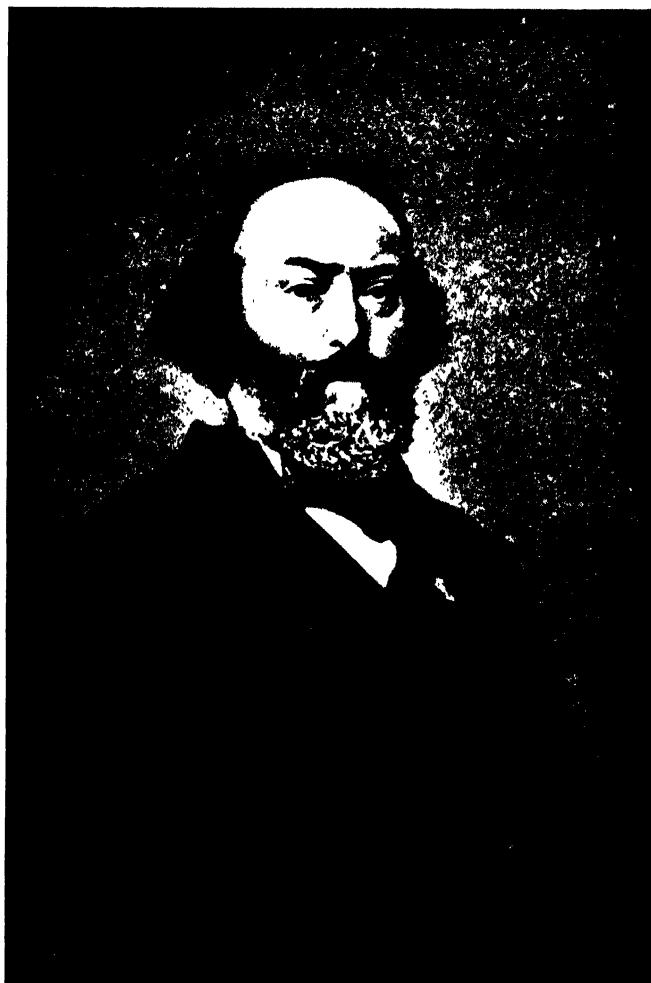
It was in 1846 that the intimacy of Rousseau and Millet began at Barbizon, an intimacy that developed but slowly, for each seems to have been at the beginning somewhat suspicious of the other. Both were in sore straits regarding money matters and each was of a retiring nature. Mutual confidences began sparingly, but with time increased until the two opened their hearts, one to the other, telling of their troubles and their discouragements. The friendship increasing, there were intimate conversations regarding work, even consultations on compositions, and each had a good influence on the other; though both were proud and Rousseau had somewhat of a jealous spirit.

The year 1848, with all its exciting events, affected the painters as well as the rest of the

people. The old order had to make way for the new in art as in politics. Among the first of the proclamations of the new Republic was one to the effect that the director of the National Museum of the Louvre proposed that all pictures sent in be liberally treated, that the artists themselves select a jury and that this jury take charge of recompenses, medals, and purchases by the State, as well as the acceptance of the pictures. This was indeed a change from the old methods and the cliques that controlled affairs which had kept so many of the new men from showing their work. Among the revolutionary men chosen to serve on this jury were Rousseau, Corot, Delaroche, Couture, Ary Scheffer and many more reactionaries. Rousseau served on the jury although he sent nothing; and the wonder was how Rousseau, who had been so badly treated all the years, could bring himself to act unfavourably on any of the men submitting works. Still, it was maintained, some one had to serve, and it is recorded that the jury showed great leniency to all the contributors. The Republic

too, desirous of making amends for the bad treatment of many of the men in previous years, did all it could to conciliate the artists. It bestowed commissions on many, including Rousseau and his friend Jules Dupré, each of whom was to receive four thousand francs for a picture—a large sum in those days, and even in these not despised by the painters, since the French government is never prodigal in its payment for works of art by living men.

Rousseau's subject was a painting now in the Louvre, *Coucher du Soleil*, which was first shown in the Salon of 1850-51. It is a composition of rare and impressive beauty and artistic craftsmanship, representing an opening through a great woodland, with the trunks of some splendid trees silhouetted against the evening sky. Some cattle drink in a pool which reflects the great luminosity of the heavens, and tenderly against the sky in the distance is seen a gnarled oak. It is the work of a genuine poet, of a man who knew his trade thoroughly, and who was a master of composition balance, of light and shade.



PORTRAIT OF ROUSSEAU



Courtesy M. Knodler & Co.

LA FERME SOUS BOIS
ROUSSEAU



Courtesy M. Knodler & Co.

BOSQUET D'ARBES
ROUSSEAU

There is another picture by Rousseau, taken from much the same place in the forest, though the composition is entirely different. This he called *The Rising Sun*, and it is interesting as showing how the master was quick to grasp the landscape possibilities of the material about him, for here he has made two entirely different compositions from almost the identical spot, changing his viewpoint but slightly and preserving in both many of the same forms.

Although they had little sympathy with the art of war, June of 1848 found both Rousseau and his friend Dupré, in Paris, armed with muskets, patrolling the boulevards, helping to maintain order. Happily, after a short while, both were able to return to Barbizon and resume their more congenial and peaceful work.

It was at this time that people coming to the little village of Barbizon found a strange young woman presiding over the Rousseau household, and from the painter's great respect and tender love, it was presumed—though no awkward questions were asked—that she was Rous-

seau's wife, which to all intents and purposes she was.

Barbizon henceforth was to be the scene of Rousseau's uninterrupted labours, save when sickness prevented, and here he laboured from now on with increased enthusiasm and courage, only occasionally making a short trip. Yet the next year he was to be further discouraged by still further neglect. Under the new Republic, he had looked for a reasonable treatment and fair appreciation. In this he was disappointed for, when there came the announcement of honours, he found that he had been neglected; to his friend, Jules Dupré, there had come the Cross of the Legion of Honour, while to him had been given only a medal of the first class. Disappointed, hurt, angry, his first thought was that somehow Dupré had played him false—an unjust suspicion, for poor Dupré had nothing to do with any awarding of honour; but in Rousseau's impetuosity, he allowed his remarks to get to the ears of his friend and a break occurred that lasted a

long while—the breach was in reality never fully healed.

In 1850 Rousseau had in his studio about fifty-three unsold pictures, and his usual pressing need for money compelled him to take some steps toward disposing of them. It was finally resolved to sell them at auction, where they brought a total sum of \$3,140, or about \$60 a canvas; but the expenses attending the sale were nearly half this amount and so Rousseau's profits were small indeed. Now, in 1851 came a second Legion of Honour episode, for this time it was Rousseau's pupil, Diaz, who was given the coveted red ribbon while the master was ignored again. Diaz himself was furious, for his admiration for Rousseau knew no bounds. His first impulse was indignantly to return the decoration, sending with the cross a letter expressing his chagrin that his master should so have been neglected, a course that naturally would have harmed both and from which he was dissuaded. What he did, however, at a dinner given to the gentlemen

who had been decorated, was to rise and make a public protest and to offer his now famous toast: "Théodore Rousseau, our master who has been forgotten." It was a bombshell that frightened the others at the banquet and there was an ominous silence, no one having the courage to second the toast or to utter a single word in support of the protest.

Indignant at his treatment, Rousseau made a resolution not to send again to the official exhibition at the Salon; but at the personal request of the Director of the Museum, he was induced to change his mind and at the display of 1852 he was again in evidence with three masterly canvases.

From 1855 Rousseau was to know no more of financial troubles, for there was established an excellent market for his work and his pictures sold fairly frequently and at reasonable prices. He even had a surplus and he came to the aid of several of his artist friends, notably Millet, to whom he gave four thousand francs for his canvas, *The Grafter*, insisting he was purchasing for an American who desired

to conceal his identity. Some years afterward, it is related, Millet discovered the picture in Rousseau's studio, when Rousseau laughingly remarked that he was the stranger and that Millet could have the canvas whenever he wanted it.

This year, 1855, was that of the Exposition Universelle and it brought full recognition to Rousseau. Most of his pictures that had been refused during the years were gathered together and hung in a group, the artist having a veritable triumph; though it is recorded that his fellow artists were more appreciative than the general public who were yet unable to fully comprehend the work, incredible as this may seem, for looking at the work to-day, admirable in every way, it would seem to have an appeal equally large for the layman as for the artist.

Many triumphs were now to come to Rousseau, as well as more difficulties. He was stunned by the death of the only son of his dear friend Diaz, a most promising youth; and he had to meet the severe illness of his wife. In the fall of 1869 he took her to the *Franche-*

Comté, where he had first met her, in the hope that the change might benefit her health. Millet accompanied him and together they did some sketching. In the following March he held another sale at the Hotel Drouot, which again was an indifferent one, averaging one hundred and twenty-five dollars for about twenty-five pictures.

Rousseau about this time became most despondent and he was continually harassed, what with the sickness of his wife, his unusual expenses, and the feeling that he was not receiving his just dues as a painter. There were relatives whom he supported, his father was in a bad way financially, and generally he was called upon to endure more than his share of trouble. Meanwhile, though he again sent his wife to the *Franche-Comté*, her health continuing bad, he himself remained at Barbizon, where he continued working seriously. During her absence he had invited an old student friend, one Villardi, to stay with him, a friend of whom he was very fond and who had found himself in hard luck. There the young man

ensconced himself, became a part of the household, and was left in charge while Rousseau went to fetch his wife home. As if poor Rousseau had not had troubles enough, still more were in store for him, for during his absence this friend committed suicide and, falling in the act, overturned a lighted candle which set fire to some sheets and but for a miracle would have burned down the entire house, including all the work of Rousseau which was piled about the walls.

Rousseau was struck with remorse for leaving his friend, accusing himself of being in a measure responsible for the unhappy event. So sensitive was he about the affair that he never referred to it subsequently and, as a penance, insisted ever after on taking the bedroom of the suicide as his own. As a matter of fact, he died in the same bed.

In 1863, in May, there was another sale by auction, this time of seventeen paintings, and these went better than the others, fetching him almost three thousand dollars, a sum which greatly encouraged Rousseau and enabled him

to make some purchases he had long desired. In the fall of that year he started off on a sketching expedition, making a number of pictures and drawings of Mont Blanc and nearby mountains; but, the weather proving bad, he was attacked with a heavy cold and threatened with inflammation of the lungs, so he returned to Barbizon but a ghost of his former self. From then on his health became a matter of much concern to himself and his friends. His wife gradually became worse mentally, and Rousseau's intimates endeavoured to persuade him to send her away where she might be properly looked after, thus leaving him free to work, but this he positively refused to do and the situation went from bad to worse. He became highly nervous and unstrung, was unable to sleep, and his friends became greatly concerned, Millet in particular sitting up with him night after night. Notwithstanding this drawback, his condition does not seem to have interfered with the artistic results of his work, for about this time he produced one of his undoubted masterpieces, *The Village of Bec-*

quigny, a canvas of rare beauty and significance, a picture he sent to the Salon of 1864, where it received the highest praise from the press. The naïve simplicity of the composition, the frank rendering, and the obvious loving application, all made the painting attractive and appealing.

The end of the year found a return of the great pains from which Rousseau suffered, so in April of 1865 he went on a journey with Mme. Rousseau to the seashore, at Boulogne, where unfortunately he was not able to remain for long, as his wife dragged him away to the mountains. There he remained only a little while and was shortly back in Paris, sometime in May.

The distinguished collector, Prince Demidoff, a wonderfully rich Russian, this year gave commissions to a number of these Barbizon artists, Rousseau among the rest, to make some large decorative panels to be placed in the dining-room of his home. For this work the artists were to receive ten thousand francs for each panel. The two panels by Rousseau took

up two years of his time, the themes being a spring day effect and a sunset. They disclose few of the qualities that made the artist famous, being somewhat perfunctory and uninspired as is so often the case where certain restrictions have to be observed. They were also executed under the strain of the illness of both the artist and his wife. Twenty thousand francs for these two works, however, was considered a splendid sum in those days and, as if to make amends for all the neglect Rousseau had suffered from juries, and for the material lack of appreciation of the years, two Paris dealers now came to the front and made a really princely offer to the artist of something like one hundred and fifty thousand francs for all the completed pictures and sketches remaining on his hands. M. Durand-Ruel, yet living, was one of them. It was an offer that Rousseau finally accepted, and it made him more or less independent, but it brought little comfort, since his health was shattered and his wife remained incurable.

In 1867, Rousseau was elected president of



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LANDSCAPE AT PICARDIE
 ROUSSEAU



Courtesy M. Knoedler & Co.

LA FERME

the jury for the Universal Exposition of that year, held in Paris, a most distinguished artistic honour, which, however, in the end was to bring on more heart burnings, since many of his colleagues were advanced in the Legion of Honour decoration from being a "Chevalier" to that of the higher grade of "Officier," while Rousseau, the president of the jury, was ignored. As a consequence, he was furious, as he well had a right to be, at the neglect and, indeed, the studied insult of the authorities, whom the old Classicists had still under their dominion.

This wretched treatment practically hastened Rousseau's death. At first there was talk of petitioning the Emperor—indeed a memorial was drawn up, but it was never sent in; then Rousseau was seized with a stroke of paralysis and Millet and his wife took him back to Barbizon after they had tried a change for him at Paris. The tale grows pitiful indeed, for at Barbizon Mme. Rousseau, having become hopelessly insane, was now violent. As Rousseau would not listen for a moment to

any proposition to put her away in an asylum, he was obliged to lie in his bed and hear her ravings, and she made his life hideous with her continued cries. It was an impossible situation that no one seemed able to change, with the result that Rousseau was visited with still another stroke. He grew more and more feeble until, on December 22, 1867, his life went out as Millet and a friend stood at his bedside, to the end his sufferings being intense. It was indeed a tragedy of the most awful kind, the misery unrelieved in any way.

Too late—for Rousseau was on his death-bed—the government sought to make amends for the wretched and continued neglect of its distinguished artist. In August of the year of his death, he was made Officer of the Legion of Honour. It was an honour he had long coveted, one which had been given to many of his friends, but which hitherto had passed him by. The painters, Alfred Stevens and Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, had come down to Barbizon to see him and bring him the good news. But his health was such that they were not even

allowed to enter the sick-chamber. Millet went himself and made the announcement, which was received cheerfully and gave great pleasure, but Rousseau was beyond any excitement at his advancement. The news had come too late.

To Millet, the death was a great shock, for Rousseau and this shy peasant had become intimate. Millet had supervised his household during the illness, had looked after Rousseau's interests, and, when the man passed away, he took care of the unfortunate wife who survived Rousseau two years. It was a beautiful friendship, that of Rousseau and Millet, purely disinterested. Each was of great assistance to the other, each contributed in no uncertain way to advance the other's interests, not alone with kindly suggestion and sage counsel, but with pecuniary help, for their purses were mutually at each other's call. Both had had severe struggles and each had known neglect and intense suffering, yet neither faltered for a moment in holding up to high standards and ideals, maintaining a supreme and splendid con-

fidence and dignity in his art. Each appeared to have but a single idea of life, which was work—intelligent, enthusiastic work at the profession each loved with such marvellous devotion. Nor were the hours of the day sufficient for them; they worked at night; they dreamed pictures, schemed out compositions; and Rousseau, even in his last moments as death was about to seize him, was remarked to be endeavouring to trace out lines on the covers of his bed, his hands grasping an imaginary brush.

“Never,” said Rousseau to his friend Sensier, “was day long enough; never was night short enough. Have you ever heard of that coxcomb, of that impudent person called Pygmalion, who was so satisfied with his work that he came to love it? I should like to experience this presumption; it might be a crushing happiness, but I shall never attain it.” Rousseau further maintained that a man should be courageous, faithful, rich enough to produce only one grand work, so that this work should be a masterpiece and glorify man in his creation. “Were I allowed to have a wish,” he said, “it

would be that I were a millionaire, with nothing to do but to labour upon the creation of a unique work; to devote myself to it, to suffer and enjoy it, until I should be content with it, and, after years of proof, I could sign it and say, 'There stops my strength, and there has my heart ceased to beat.' The rest of my life should be passed in drawing or in painting for my amusement, studies which would be but flowers thrown on the work of which I should be satisfied."

Recalling this wish, it seems the height of irony to read that, sixty years later, pictures by Rousseau command almost any price that one chooses to ask for them. We observe, in an auction sale in 1913, that his landscape, *The Pool*, brought \$17,000; that his *Plateau de Belle Croix* soared up to \$15,200; while pictures fetching less than twenty-five thousand francs are so frequent as not even to be worth our notice. Any important work by Rousseau, when it comes on the market now, is a matter of large concern and interest to both dealer and collector, who would journey across the ocean

for the privilege of bidding on it, and it would bring a great fortune, with many anxious for it. So are the changes of the years, for the one-time "*Grand Refusé*" has become a personage to be reckoned with in art.

As a craftsman, Rousseau has not been surpassed and though he was most painstaking in his technique, most laboured, there was little sense of fatigue when the composition was completed. It is a positive delight to a fellow painter to remark his absolute knowledge of landscape construction, his grasp of tree and other forms, his beautiful arrangement of light and shade. The land in his pictures lies flat, the pool is as wet and as limpid as can well be imagined; the skies envelop the entire stretch of nature he portrays. And while it is all realistic to a degree, there is no sense of the photographic; for Rousseau presents—and you feel it unmistakably—the elemental side of things, the great, big quality. His drawing is superb, whether of foreground stuff, great oaks, or the lay of the land; and there are marvellous gradations of tones, each one painted

with loving attention, gone over and over again, the result of intelligent analysis. Time, too, has mellowed and brought together these tones, has seemed to give a greater harmony and charm.

Like the rest, he was very fecund, for in truth he was always at it. Life meant to him continual application before nature, with his easel ever set up to catch fleeting effects, to elaborate his pictures, until he had said positively the last word. It is all such a healthy art too. Other men, labouring, investigating, improving, would in the end have fatigued their canvases, have worked the life out of them. Not so Rousseau. His was the intelligent refinement, the master's progress until he had secured all there was to be had. Even then he was always regretting he could not still further apply himself, and there was invariably the feeling that he might have made even greater improvement.

Royal Cortissoz, the distinguished art critic, says: "What is it that makes a great picture independent of its frame? Several things, as

beauty, style, but above all things, it is power—the elements of human life are seized by a master hand and expressed on canvas with such truth and strength that their inherent vitality is not reduced, but is really glorified and made far more impressive.”

One feels in Rousseau a supremely authoritative note. He is a man who sits among the Olympians, clear-eyed, sure-headed, knowing just what he wants to do, and doing it with unwavering authority. I have said somewhere else that it is a splendid thing to have a sublime confidence in oneself. It becomes a thing truly magnificent when that faith is on an absolutely sure foundation. Rousseau's was, happily. He knew when he succeeded at one time better than at another. He was after certain things in his art, and he went straight in that direction, allowing nothing to swerve him. I can only think that time will strengthen the commanding position of this great landscape man, greater, as I see it, than any of his predecessors, for, equal to the best of them in a colour way, he was the peer of all in his intui-

tive understanding of the problems he set himself to solve, and with the best of them he found pictorial interest, admirable disposition of his light and shade, giving to the most simple phases of nature, a poetry and a charm indescribably beautiful, appealing, and tender. So we may be thankful for the splendid legacy he has left to the world—of nature rendered through the highest artistic temperament, of the world of out of doors recorded by the hand and with the mind of a true poet.

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CHARLES FRANÇOIS DAUBIGNY
1817–1878

VI

CHARLES FRANÇOIS DAUBIGNY

ALTHOUGH Daubigny is classed with the group known as the Barbizon Painters, if he has left any noteworthy example of work executed in that village, I have been unable to find any account of it. There are brief references to his having been occasionally at that place and he was an intimate of many of the men of the coterie there. For the most part, however, he spent his time along the banks of quiet rivers, or in Normandy, by the sea, but the great Forest of Fontainebleau seems never to have inspired his brush. Yet a Barbizon man he is called, and for all intents and purposes he must be included when any reference is made to the "Men of Thirty."

Charles François Daubigny was born in Paris, February 15, 1817. Like Rousseau and Corot, he was of the great city and, like

them, he was drawn to depicting the landscape far from the busy haunts of men. In his case, however, he was sent to the country at an early age, where, as a delicate child, he was kept in the open for many years, with the result that he regained his health and became fairly robust.

Unlike so many others of the group, he came of thorough artistic ancestry, being the son of a painter and the nephew of many more. The father, Edouard François Daubigny, was not, however, a man of distinction in his profession and in his youth the young man was brought up to know the needs of strict economy. All the schooling he received was from his mother, who died when he was but twelve years of age, after which the boy was made to assist in earning the daily bread of the family. Always he seemed to have had a brush in his hand, painting at first with his father, then picking up odds and ends of money here and there by general work, such as decorating bonbon boxes, fans, anything that would yield him even the scantiest return. In this way he was driven to exercise much ingenuity, to become more or



Courtesy M. Knoedler & Co.

LANDSCAPE
DAUBIGNY



Courtesy M. Knoedler & Co.

LA SOULAIE
DAUBIGNY



Courtesy Scott & Fowles Co.

ON THE OISE
DAUPHINY



Courtesy Scott & Fowles Co.

ON THE SEINE
DAUPHIGNY

less of an adept at interesting compositions, and in the end, in a modest manner, an earner of money, and one who fully realised its value. From the beginning he managed to save, and to live within his income, a habit he carried through life, whereby he escaped the wretchedness and unhappiness that came to some of his fellows.

So it was, at the early age of seventeen, Daubigny found himself not only able to maintain himself, but to put a little away for the proverbial rainy day. Always, too, he seemed to have a direct aim, an intelligent outlook on life, and a fine ambition. About this time he formed a close friendship with a young painter named Mignon, or Mignan, who subsequently gave up art for business, but who was then most enthusiastic. The friend likewise had the keenest spirit of economy and the two invented a novel savings bank which consisted of a hole in a plaster wall in the attic where, pooling their resources, they dropped therein every stray coin they could spare, meanwhile working at any job that offered. The two were intent

upon saving enough to take them to Italy, at that time considered the one country wherein to complete an art education. At the expiration of a year they knocked away the plaster, to discover that they had amassed about three hundred dollars, more or less of a princely sum for them. With this they started out for Italy, on foot, with their worldly possessions on their backs.

It was a foregone conclusion that a youth of seventeen possessing such restraint, ambition, and directness of purpose, would make his way. A year was spent in visiting Rome, Florence, and Naples, when the young men returned to the French capital, poorer in purse, but richer in experience. Mignon at this juncture left the domain of art, but Daubigny, after many efforts to obtain some sort of paying position that would yield him a livelihood, finally succeeded in securing a post under the official *Conservateur des Tableaux de France*, as aid to this picture restorer. It was, however, not a congenial occupation for Daubigny, whose soul revolted at seeing masterpieces ruth-

lessly repainted by men of little ability, and he raised so many objections that he and his chief had numerous quarrels; so many, indeed, that the situation became too tense for the young man and he lost his job. But under the guidance of this keeper of the king's pictures, one M. Granet, it is probable that Daubigny gained a good deal of valuable experience, for of course he constantly had under his eye a succession of masterly canvases from which he must have made serious study of manner of putting on pigment, arrangement of colour, technique, and general treatment, later to stand him in good stead.

In his odd moments at this epoch, he began to work at etching and engraving, which he studied with great seriousness as well as with capital results. He became intimate with two painters, Louis Trimolet—who later became his brother-in-law—and Louis Steinheil, as well as with a sculptor, the four pooling their finances against the common end of exhibiting at the Salon, one of them thus being able to send a painting or sculpture to the annual dis-

play, which otherwise would have been impossible with their slender individual purses. Three of this group made illustrations for periodicals. Daubigny was just twenty-one when he made his first appearance in the Salon with a picture he called *The Chancel End of Notre Dame*. It did not attract much attention, nor did its minuteness and attention to detail indicate in any way a suspicion of his subsequent development into breadth and splendid simplicity. Two years later came his picture, *St. Jerome in the Desert*. So classic was it in arrangement and treatment that it was suggested that Daubigny should enter the competition for the Prize of Rome.

Winning the *Prix de Rome* has spoiled many a promising artist. Happily, Daubigny escaped. This distinction, which is so eagerly sought after by the French art student, was instituted as far back as 1666, to stimulate zeal among the young men in art. The winner of the competition is sent to Rome for a period of four years—in the early days, it was five years—where he stays at the expense of the govern-

ment, being housed and lodged in a beautiful palace owned by the State—the Villa de Medici. Painter, sculptor, musician, and precious stone cutter compete annually. There are not wanting those who claim that all individuality is crushed out of these men who are thus bound to classic traditions. The competition for this attractive outing, however, brings forth the most clever men, though it often happens the genuinely original genius is passed in the race by a less brilliant student who has worked more in conformity with conventional, academic traditions. Most of the able French artists have had a trial at the *Prix de Rome*, but many of them who have subsequently attained much renown have failed to win the desired award. The list of winners, however, contains many strong artists, including Ingres, in 1801; Couture, in 1837; Regnault, in 1866; Merson, in 1869; Morot, in 1873; Besnard, in 1874; and others.

In order to fit himself for this competition, Daubigny entered the studio of Paul Delaroche for a brief while. He was successful in

passing the preliminary *concours*, being the third in the list of eight students. It seems, however, that he either forgot, or did not know, that a personal attendance was necessary on a certain day when the final theme was given out. He had taken that occasion to make a trip to Vincennes. Though messengers were sent to his house and after him in the country, it was too late, and his absence disqualified him for any further competition. Naturally, he was much disappointed; but realising there was nothing to be done in the matter, he soon settled down to work again, and it was not long before he discovered that the classical and the academic were not for his particular talent. He went out to nature, studied in the fields, along the streams, and shortly became enamoured of the landscape, which he began to execute with such success that he soon attracted attention. Yet he was not without his discouragements, for several of the critics were hostile to his manner of work, no less a person than Théophile Gautier insisting that his pictures were not "finished enough."

The year 1843 saw Daubigny take upon his shoulders the responsibilities of matrimony, and the further responsibility of the support of his widowed sister. Three years later, a son was born to him—Karl, who became a fairly respectable painter. Karl Daubigny survived his father but nine years.

In 1848 a second medal was awarded Daubigny in the Salon, where he had five landscapes. To receive such an honour at the early age of thirty-one was a distinction indeed. It not only encouraged him, but gave him immediately a position in his profession. This year, as well, he received a considerable legacy that placed him in very easy circumstances, permitting him to travel and to have complete freedom of mind. Now it was that he had made for himself the famous house-boat that enabled him to drift down many streams and to paint nature under all conditions of weather and effects, a boat that has been much written of and was the first of so many that have subsequently been fitted out for just such sketching purposes. On this craft Daubigny lived season after sea-

son, finding a wealth of material under the most delightful conditions for the painter. It was called the *Botin*, was thirty feet long, flat like a skiff, and was equipped for living purposes. His friends dubbed him "*Le Capitaine*" and he entertained them on board royally. His son Karl was his frequent companion after the lad grew up. Sometimes pupils went along with them, and the craft was a well known one on the rivers Seine, Marne, and Oise. Among these pupils were some Americans, notably the distinguished landscape painter, Dwight W. Tryon, N. A. Achille Oudinot, a French painter who settled in Boston, was another. Oudinot was fond of recounting various stories of Daubigny's manner of painting, of his life on his house-boat, and his pleasant relations to his pupils.

Daubigny, according to the manner of his day, used an infinite variety of colours on his palette, some thirty or more pigments being squeezed out in formidable array. Like the others, too, at that time, he would mix tints, holding them on his palette-knife against na-



Courtesy M. Knoedler & Co.

ON THE OISE
DAUBIGNY



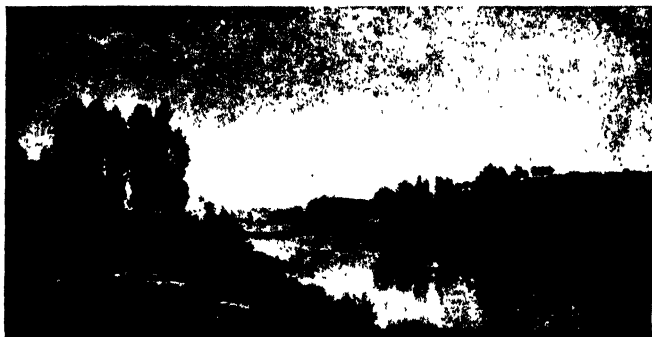
Courtesy Collier & Co.

THE SEA
DAUBIGNY



Courtesy M. Knoedler & Co.

SUNRISE ON THE OISE
DAUBIGNY



Courtesy Scott & Fowler Co.

EVENING ON THE OISE
DAUBIGNY



ture, in his effort to match her tones, but whereas so many of his pupils—Oudinot among the rest—failed by this method to get any vibrancy and brilliancy of colour, any sparkle and charm, Daubigny's genius rose superior to methods, and the result was a masterly performance, full of lovely colour quality.

Like the rest of this group of Barbizon Painters, Daubigny had a marvellous intuition for composition—which was one of the secrets of their success. He knew to a nicety the proper relations of light and shade in a composition, the value of masses and their placement, while his drawing of tree forms, his landscape anatomy, and construction were those of a highly trained observer. As a rule, his river compositions were of the most simple nature, with nothing of the dramatic, no suspicion of the sensational, being familiar scenes, always with a quiet appeal, yet so essentially of the place, breathing so the spirit of nature, the calm of eventide, the effulgence of dawn, or the tranquillity of the twilight. Generally there is a stretch of hills at the back, with sedge grasses

in the immediate foreground, while soft shadows are reflected in the tranquil stream. These were essentially the rivers of France with their delicious greens, their willows and tangle, with now and then the poplar and the birch. One may not look at his canvases without realising Daubigny's intense love of nature and his entire sympathy with it in all its phases. And it is little short of marvellous how, with such simple material, he made so entrancing a theme and varied it so constantly. In one composition the mass would be to the right; in another, to the left. Always there was the stream. Look at these pictures carefully, however, and you will see no repetition, but instead an infinite variety such as nature herself suggests. A distinguished French writer said of him: "He is a painter of charming scenes just as they impress his artistic sense, without artifice in composition or treatment of light; the real, hospitable, familiar country, without display or disguise."

These qualities told. Soon Daubigny's reputation spread and the State began to take of-

ficial notice of him. The Minister of Justice placed a canvas, *La Moisson*, in his bureau and the next year—1853—a first class medal was awarded the painter. Then it was that the Emperor came forward and purchased his lovely *Pond at Gylieu*. This, of course, was of great material advantage to the painter, whose fortune might now be said to have been made, for as Napoleon III bought, so many of his courtiers followed his example, and Daubigny became a marked personality in the art world.

In 1855, one of his four pictures sent to the exhibition at the Salon was purchased by the government for the Luxembourg Museum. It is now transferred to the Louvre. This was *Lock in the Valley of Optevos*.

In 1857 came his *Spring-time*, now in the Louvre, which may almost be said to be his masterpiece. Through a path in a cornfield a peasant girl rides a donkey. On the left is a mass of blossoming trees, brilliant in their white and pink colouring. A quiet valley stretches out in the distance, and the whole atmosphere seems charged with the quality and

the perfume of the season, a mass of bewilderingly beautiful, tender colour, joyous in expression, refined in tone, an all-pervading idyll of spring. It is a long and narrow canvas and it made a veritable sensation when it was shown. Since then its popularity has never waned. By universal consent it is regarded as one of the most successful interpretations of spring ever placed on canvas. Students copy it; visitors stand before it admiringly; its appeal is unmistakable.

Two years after this work, in 1859, came the honour of the red ribbon of the Legion of Honour; and in 1874 Daubigny was advanced to still another grade in the order, being made an officer.

All this success and financial gain—for money came in plentifully now—made not the slightest change, in either the attitude or the habits of the artist. He had but one aim in life—to paint; and that he kept up until the very last. His life in the country was simple, his pleasures the most humble. To paint on his boat, to have a few friends, to lead the tranquil

life—these were all he asked. He had built two country houses, the last at Auvers on the Oise, and this in time became a remarkable place, full of decorations by his fellow painters. In a loggia leading to the studio, Corot had painted three large upright panels. Corot was strongly drawn to Daubigny, who looked on the older man as a parent, going to him in all his perplexities for advice. In 1872, when Corot was seventy-six, he came down to visit Daubigny. He desired to add to the decorations of the studio, but he was far too old to mount the necessary ladders. He made sketches, though, of what he wanted done and he insisted that Daubigny and his son Karl execute the work under his supervision. This was done to the satisfaction of the aged painter, who was only regretful that he could not do the work personally. Corot admired Daubigny's work as well and bought of him from time to time, as was his wont in his delightful encouragement of the men about him. His collection included one of the best pictures Daubigny had made.

For the last twenty years of life, Daubigny's reputation was universally established. There was no longer any dissenting voice in acknowledging him a master landscape painter. Commissions flowed in upon him. The State bought many of his pictures and presented them to provincial museums, and in 1865 the Emperor again showed his appreciation of the man's talent by commissioning him to paint a view of St. Cloud, which was shown in the Salon of that year and is now in the Museum of Chalons-sur-Mer. About this time Daubigny was painting many views of the shore and sea along the coast of Villerville-sur-Mer. These are admirable, but they lack the charm of his simple pastoral canvases of the more quiet river scenes.

At the *Exposition Universelle* of 1867 he was given a medal of the first class. Not alone in France, however, did his reputation advance but in England as well great attention had been devoted to his painting, and his canvases were bought by several well known collectors. So much was he appreciated by the painters them-

selves, that he was invited by a group of them to make a visit to London, Sir Frederick Leighton being one of the prime movers in the request. In consequence of this pleasant attitude of his fellow artists, Daubigny sent an important and large work to the Royal Academy of that year. It was called *Moonlight* and was one of his finest efforts.

Royal Academy juries have ever been a law unto themselves but their judgment has not been invariably impeccable. They refused the now famous portrait by the late James McNeill Whistler of his mother, which at present is one of the chief works of the Louvre. This was in 1872 and it subsequently was hung only because one of the Council, Sir William Boxall, threatened to resign if the action was not rescinded. Eventually Whistler's canvas was admitted, but so badly skied as to make it almost impossible for the visitor to see it well.

So, in 1866, when Daubigny's beautiful work was sent in, the Royal Academy jury treated it shabbily—to put it mildly—and the committee of artists who had requested Daubigny to visit

them was correspondingly embarrassed. A newly elected member of the Academy, H. T. Wells, bought the work, for which only a moderate price had been asked, but there was great trepidation as to how the distinguished French artist would act when he should see his work thus badly placed. It was a trying situation when Daubigny and his son Karl walked into the galleries, and nothing but the courteous treatment of the inviting group, coupled with the fact of the sale of the work, smoothed matters over.

Daubigny made still another visit to England, during the Franco-German War of 1870, where he secured several sketches, going as well into Holland and painting much there. It was now thought necessary by his family and friends that Daubigny should have a studio in Paris, a sort of show place where he could exhibit his pictures and meet collectors and dealers since there was so great a demand for his work. This he did, though under protest, and it added considerably to his income, yet he broke away continually, leaving the enter-

tainment of visitors to his family. An amusing tale is told of Daubigny returning to Paris to receive his new decoration of the Legion of Honour, when he had been promoted to the grade of *Officier*. Wandering through the streets, he met his friend and fellow painter of still-life, the well known Antoine Vollon. "What are you doing in town?" asked the latter. "Well," said Daubigny, "it is a bore, but I have come to receive my decoration, and I am off to-morrow." "Alone?" queried Vollon. "Yes," replied Daubigny. "Then come to my house and dine," said Vollon, and Daubigny willingly agreed. As they arrived near the house, Vollon stopped suddenly. "Parbleu!" he exclaimed, "I suddenly remember that I am quite alone in the house. We must get our own meal." "Agreed!" said Daubigny; and they went to butcher, baker, and wine merchant, returning laden with packages of meat, bread, vegetables and the inevitable claret. They were soon before the kitchen fire cooking their repast, after which they went in great state to receive one of the highest distinctions

which the government gives to its famous artists!

Living on the house-boat and being much in the damp air finally produced attacks of rheumatism, and to this being added a touch of malaria as well as some gout, Daubigny was continually in much pain. Indeed, the last four years of his life were very miserable, for he was constantly suffering. He worked, too, under enormous difficulties, for the rheumatism affected his hands. Still, he did manage to turn out an occasional picture and it never fell below his standard. When the end came, on February 19, 1878, it was enlargement of the heart that carried the painter away with great suddenness. His general popularity is disclosed by the fact that over fifteen hundred people attended the funeral services, which were held in the church of *Notre Dame de Lorette*; he was interred in the cemetery of *Père-Lachaise*, where there were official speeches by representatives of the government.

While death-bed utterances are as a rule generally apocryphal, the reputed last words of



Courtesy M. Knodler & Co.

LAVEUSES À AUVERS

DE LA FAMILLE

Daubigny were at least characteristic and disclosed his lifelong admiration for his revered friend, Corot. He is reported to have said, "Adieu. I am going above to see if my friend Corot has found me any subjects for landscapes." The utterance is essentially Gallic, very charming, and surely it does no harm to believe this particular one.

Although the American painter, Dwight W. Tryon, met the master only a year before Daubigny died, he saw something of him and had many interesting talks. He recalls visiting in his studio in the *rue Notre Dame de Lorette*, where he saw not only many of the studies Daubigny had made about Paris and the environs, but several made during his visit to London. These were of the Thames and were most interesting. When he asked the master about his method of work, Daubigny would invariably reply, "I know of none. I try to paint as directly and as rapidly as possible what I see and feel." "To his summer place, Auvers," says Mr. Tryon, "many of the younger painters were in the habit of going to

sketch and seek the advice of the master. In his relations to younger men he was always most kind and considerate, treating them as comrades and equals. His critical and analytical faculties were not particularly strong. He was easily pleased with his own work and with the work of others; and to this quality he owed most of his stimulating power as a teacher. He seemed oblivious to the bad in work, but invariably found whatever good there might be, and this he praised without reserve. The effect was, as I have said, stimulating and encouraging, and his pupils made much progress under his teaching. He was quite as ready to take as to give advice, and was always asking his pupils to give their views on his own studies.

“To this lack of a strongly developed critical faculty is due to some extent his remarkable productiveness. While to his larger and more important pictures he gave great care and thought, with his smaller pictures and studies he was often too easily satisfied. I have frequently seen him transpose a morning sketch,

made in full grey light, into a sunset or twilight, by adding a note or two of vivid colour at the horizon, paying little or no attention to the many notes of colour necessary to unite and harmonise two such different effects. Had such incomplete notes as these been kept for his own use, nothing could be said in reproach about them or their producer; but they were readily enough yielded up to dealers, who were only too glad to get them at small prices. The effect of such work being distributed broadcast is misleading, and is not calculated to add to the general reputation of any painter. Only to those having full knowledge of the best work of an artist can such fragments be of use, helping, as they then do, to a complete understanding of the whole."

Once, when Mr. Tryon was visiting him, Daubigny remarked, calling attention to his hand crippled with rheumatism, "I have now to think twice before I lay on any colour."

"His catholicity and open-mindedness in art," Mr. Tryon maintains, "was marked. To the last," he says, "he was always ready to

accept and to encourage the efforts of other men. He often spoke of work which was radical and even bizarre in character, but in which he found some new mind struggling for expression, and he would, in the face of strong opposition from his brother artists, insist upon a just recognition of its good qualities. Many phases and qualities of nature he passed over and left untouched. Others have sung, and will continue to sing, songs of nature of which he gave no hint; but the sea and shore of *La Manche*, and the orchards and fields of Auvers, and the many rivers of central France, must always recall with pleasure and admiration the life and art of Charles François Daubigny."

CHARLES ÉMILE JACQUE
1813–1894

VII

CHARLES ÉMILE JACQUE

THE last survivor of the group of Barbizon Painters, Charles Jacque, enjoyed a large popularity that not only has never waned but, on the contrary, has increased with the years; yet he left behind him few souvenirs, practically no correspondence, and of him there seems to be hardly an anecdote or any reminiscence, none of those stories that remain of his confrères. It was Jacque, however, who was responsible for Millet going to the little village close to the Forest of Fontainebleau. To Jacque, in 1849, Millet came with the glad news of having received a thousand francs—the final payment from the Minister of State—for his picture, *Les Faneurs*. Millet and Jacque were neighbours and intimates in Paris at that time, for they lived opposite each other in the *rue Rochechouart*. The cholera was raging. Both were in mortal

fear that their children might be attacked by the dreadful disease. "I have a thousand francs, my dear Jacque," said Millet; "I will lend you half. Let us go together into the country, I do not care where; if you can tell me of some place, all the better; but, anyway, we will leave Paris and at once."

Of all things, this was exactly what Jacque wanted to do. Nothing but the lack of ready cash had prevented his going away long before; so it will be imagined how gladly he joined in any scheme to get himself and his family away from the dread scourge. And then it came upon him that he had once heard of a little village close to the great Forest of Fontainebleau, but for the life of him he could not remember its name, further than it ended in "zon." At any rate, they could go to Fontainebleau where they would be near this desired place and where, of course, they could get all information. So it was that the memorable trip was taken. On the 13th of June, 1849, the combined families of Jacque and Millet set out by diligence for Fontainebleau,



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SHEPHERD, SHEEP AND LAMB
JACQUE



Courtesy M. Knudsen & Co.

LA SORTIE DE TROUPEAU

JACQUE



Courtesy M. Knudsen & Co.

RETURN OF THE FLOCK

JACQUE

and due credit must be given Jacque as the pioneer. On June 28, of that year, we find Millet writing to his friend Sensier that "Jacque and I have settled to stay at Barbizon for some time, and have accordingly, each of us, taken rooms. The prices are excessively low compared to those in Paris; and as it is easy to get down to town if necessary, and the country is superbly beautiful, we hope to work more quietly here, and perhaps do better things. In fact, we intend to spend some time here."

There the two painted for many years; though not always in perfect harmony, unfortunately, for there seem to have been quarrels. Curiously enough, some of the disagreements were regarding the encroachments, both of the government and of private individuals, on the Forest of Fontainebleau in their efforts to close one of the chief entrances to the splendid woodland, for Jacque had bought some land and wanted to stop people from coming through it. Millet writes of the trouble to his friend Sensier in whose sympathetic ears he poured all his woes.

"My dear Sensier,

"You know the piece of land that Jacque bought, near the Mazette Gate of the forest, and you remember that a path has run through it for a long time. Now he does not like the way in which this path divides his land, and he has bribed the Mayor, Bélon, by painting a little picture for him, and a brooch for his wife, and promising one hundred francs for the Commune, to give him permission to close the path. The public crier has already announced that the voters are to meet next Sunday, to vote on the matter. All Barbizon is in a flutter. It appears that Jacque has promised all sorts of favours to those who will vote for his project. Many votes will be swayed by the influence of the Mayor, because the people are cowards and afraid of him, and Jacque has no doubt secured the Prefect's support. I do not know what entrance to the forest is to be made instead of the Mazette Gate, nor what will be gained or lost by the change; but it seems to me right to prevent, if possible, any one from acting just as he pleases, regardless

of public interests, especially when he tries to make rain or sunshine, just as it suits himself. Cannot you put a spoke in the wheel through the Office of the Minister? Look into it and act quickly, for next Sunday will decide the question. If there is any means of fettering their hands, let us try it. Jacque's plans are by no means limited to this enterprise. He also wishes to close the path that runs at the back of our fields. . . . Rousseau and I talked over this matter last night, and wish that we could prevent this ass of a Bélon from being at the mercy of every whim that comes into Jacque's head. Personally I care nothing about it; but it is impossible to consent to everything that he wishes to do, either in his own interests, or else to annoy others. . . . If you have, either directly or indirectly, any rapid and powerful means of influence at your disposal, whereby you can hinder this matter, put it into force, and show this new Robert Macaire that he has no right to throw dirt at every one, as it happens to please his fancy. Give Bélon a lesson also—if that be possible.

Fool that he is, to side with Jacque in this thing and help to close the forest gates which have been left open by the Administration."

So it will be seen that the course of true friendship did not run smoothly. Jacque himself was a warm friend of Sensier as well, and the three used to indulge in long and intimate conversations and discussions at Millet's lodgings, joined occasionally by Diaz or Rousseau, and often they would sit far into the night over a pot of beer with their talk. These days at Barbizon were full of profit for Jacque, who was an indefatigable worker, continually at his easel before nature.

Jacque was born in Paris, May 23, 1813. At seventeen, after a month or two with a notary, he was apprenticed to a map engraver, an occupation that was highly distasteful to him and where he remained but a brief while. There, however, he disclosed his first artistic leanings by making an etching after a head by Rembrandt, a plate showing considerable feeling. That decided him on taking up art;



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SHEEP IN THE FOREST

JACQUE



Courtesy M. Knoedler & Co.

AT THE FARM
JACQUE



Courtesy M. Knoedler & Co.

TROUPEAU DES MOUTONS
JACQUE

though he was destined to have considerable experience in a more strenuous way, for he left the map maker to join the army and was in the Fifty-second Regiment of the Line, that was in the siege of Antwerp in the Revolution of 1830.

Of Jacque's military experiences, extending over a long period, estimated at from five to seven years, there is practically no record. When his term of service was ended, he took up art again, confining himself to the making of illustrations, to engraving, and the execution of etchings; in this last field he was destined to secure no less fame than with his subsequent painting. He went to England, where he stayed twenty months, doing much pictorial work for some publishing firms there, after which he returned to Paris. His first illustrative efforts in Paris had been with the well known publisher, Henriot, in 1836. Later, he did the landscape designs for a famous edition of *Paul and Virginia*, for which it will be recalled the great Meissonier made some remarkable vignettes. All this time

Jacque seriously applied himself to work in etching, gaining enormous facility and executing many plates. He is known as the pioneer, having been perhaps the earliest of the painter-etchers of the nineteenth century, and he did more than any other man to bring a revival of this art about, considerably over five hundred plates having come from his hand. His etched work embraces a period of more than sixty years, for he outlived all his contemporaries and died at the ripe age of eighty-one, in 1894.

Jacque was thirty-two when he first seriously took up painting. His experience at etching and lithography had been of value to him and, as his composition instinct was always strong, he immediately produced serious, satisfactory work. In ten years he became known as a great sheep painter, a man for whose canvases there developed a large demand. Yet he did not confine himself to sheep, but was no less distinguished by his pictures of barnyard fowls. He is remembered in the annals of Barbizon as going about with many canvases, generally accompanied by a small flock of tame sheep.

that followed him wherever he went, serving as his models. His fecundity was enormous.

The single anecdote regarding the man and his life in Barbizon relates to a wheelbarrow. Desirous of painting one of these articles in a picture, it is recorded that Jacque went to a peasant neighbour and offered to give him a new barrow in exchange for his old one, the latter being full of character, showing its long use and, in short, in every way better fitted for pictorial representation than Jacque's new one. Amazed, the countryman willingly made the exchange and then, to the open-mouthed wonder of his neighbours, told of how that crazy painter-man had given him a brand-new barrow for his old one. This was quite beyond the comprehension of the villagers. For many days thereafter there was a procession of men at Jacque's house offering old wheelbarrows in exchange for new ones.

Jacque exhibited his paintings three times only in the Salon, the first canvas being shown in 1861, a work now in the Luxembourg Museum, in Paris. His second venture was

in 1863, and his last in 1864. He did, however, show many of his etchings and for these he received various recompenses, but all—and there were seven of them—were medals of the third class, a circumstance giving the painter great concern and much discouragement. It was not until the Paris Exposition of 1889 that he received proper recognition, when, for his etching, *La Bergerie Bearnaise*, he was awarded a Medal of Honour. He had, however, already received the ribbon of the Legion of Honour, in 1867.

Jacque had an intuitive perception of composition needs. None of his pictures is uninteresting. At a glance he seemed to seize an entertaining theme which he worked out most intelligently, always with a nice sense of light and shade, with an agreeable disposition of the mass; he drew admirably, presenting the anatomy of his landscapes and his animals with unerring accuracy. Tree forms, foregrounds, skies, he painted convincingly, and though his colour inclines to a monotony of grey, it is always effective. Painting sheep



SHEEP AND SHEPHERD
JACQUE



Courtesy Reinhardt Gallery

SHEPHERDESS AND SHEEP

so frequently with their shepherd, it is little short of astonishing that he managed to obtain so much variety as he did. He had, too, an unusual evenness.

To judge from the amount of work, both in painting and etching, that he left behind him at the time of his death, Jacque must have been quite the most industrious of the Barbizon group. His canvases and etchings are legion. And the rest of his fellows at the little French village were not idlers either. One may not escape a realisation of the fact that Jacque had studied his sheep most seriously and knew them intimately; that he painted them with an authority no one had before, nor has since, surpassed. With a few telling strokes of his brush, he indicated form and movement, putting the animals well on their feet, in attitudes familiar to those who have studied them closely.

His paintings, like those of the other Barbizon Men, have advanced enormously in value with the years and the demand of the collector, although Jacque's work has not soared to the

heights of that of his confrères. In point of fact, Jacque was not up to their level artistically, his work possessing less originality, personality, and imagination than did theirs. It does, however, contain sound, honest qualities, excellent craftsmanship, and has a strong popular appeal, for always we have in his compositions nature and the animal in the concrete, substantial and well constructed, the visual object the public knows and can grasp without any particular effort.

Jacque was without the cares and the trials that beset many of the other Barbizon Men, for his work always sold reasonably well, and he seems to have been able to do that which he liked, without the problems of a financial nature so many of the artists encounter.

Yet the great financial success and the vogue with the Paris dealers had its drawbacks, for now came a flock of imitators who forged his work cleverly, and these spurious examples found their way to England and America.

Jacque's life was most uneventful, once he had laid down his arms and quit the career of

a soldier. We find no tales of adventures, no episodes, either amusing or pathetic—save the quarrel regarding his land in Barbizon where Millet called in the assistance of Sensier, and it is fair to presume that that misunderstanding was somehow patched up, for Millet and Jacque were closely associated for many years in the little village. Jacque outlived Dupré by five years, and Dupré himself had outlived all the rest of the Barbizon Painters. Jacque's friend Millet passed away nineteen years before Jacque went the way of all flesh, and when Jacque died, Troyon was only a memory, though a glorious one, of twenty-nine years before.

So, with the passing of Charles Émile Jacque, went the last of a most extraordinary group of men, who made art history of a wonderful nature, who came at a propitious moment and grasped to the full their opportunities. These Barbizon men made a combination that the world will in all probability never see again, since to gather six painters in one small village, to find these painters all of one

nationality, of practically one ideal, enjoying an intimacy one with the other, to have them each and every one attain such rare distinction, such enormous posthumous popularity, all this makes up a curious combination indeed.

Much has been said of the trials and the sufferings of the Barbizon Men, but I am inclined to think their lot was that of the great majority of painters and, where real misery ensued, it had much to do with their temperament. Millet was undoubtedly a wretched financial manager, as was Rousseau. None of the others suffered severely, managing somehow to get along. Certainly they painted most of their time, if one may judge from the number of examples left behind. Great genius seems to be coexistent with lack of material success; but this, when sifted, as a rule, turns out to be a lack of attention to practical affairs, the ignoring of self-evident conditions requiring at least intelligent consideration. Jacque was one of the most practical of the group. Perhaps this strain of normality, this avoidance of the visionary, while it made his life easier, held

him more to earth and interfered with higher flights. At any rate, it made for a long and tranquil career, while it brought in all probability greater serenity of mind; and he certainly had a fair measure of artistic success, while he lived, which has increased with the years.

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INDEX

- Aligny, Claude, 34
Angelus, The, 51, 64, 67, 68, 72
- Barbizon, First visit Millet and Jacque, 23; town of, 33
 Baroilhet, 166
 Barye, Antoine L., 26, 35, 36, 184
Battle of the Broken Paint Pots, 136
Battle of Medina, Diaz, 136
 Belasco, Marie Manuela (Mother of Diaz), 130
 Belon (Mayor of Barbizon), 278, 279
 Beouwer, 202
 Bergerie Bearnaise, La, 284
 Bertin, Victor, 88, 90
 Besnard, Paul Albert, 255
Biblis, Corot, 113
 Blue Dial Inn, 28
 Boucher, Pastels in imitation of, by Millet, 15, 141
 Boxall, Sir William, 265
 Brascassat, Jacques R., 202
Bucherons, Les, Corot, 113
Bull, Paul Potter, 195, 199.
- Cabat, Nicholas, 133, 162, 201
 Carolus-Duran, 134
 Castagnary (Critic), 59
Chancel End of Notre Dame, Daubigny, 254
 Chauchard, M. (Buyer of Millet's "Angelus"), 68
 Chapu, 68, 213
 Cheval Blanc, Café, 136, 219
 Chevreille, Langlois de, 8, 10
 Cholera in Paris, 27
- Constable, John, 123, 173, 178, 179, 180
 Corcoran Art Gallery, 116
 Corot, Jean Baptiste Camille, 35, 60, 61, 83-125, 141, 167, 171, 172, 173, 177, 178, 184, 185, 191, 225, 249, 263, 269
 Corot, Mme., 95
 Cortissoz, Royal, 243
Côtes de Granville, Rousseau, 221
Coucher du Soleil, Rousseau, 226
 Courbet, Gustave, 204
 Couture, Thomas, 167, 225, 255
 Cuvelier, Eugene, 35
Cow Scratching Herself, Troyon, 204
 Cuyp, Albert, 200, 203
- Daubigny, Charles François, 171, 249-272, death of, 268
 Daubigny, Edouard François, 250
 Daubigny, Karl, 257, 263, 266
 Daumier, Honoré, 167
 David, J. L., 7
Dawn, Millet, 80
Death and the Woodcutter, Millet, 52
 De Camp, Joseph, 74
 Dechamps, A. G., 136, 167, 181, 184
 Deforge (Art Dealer), 17
 De Kay, Helena (Mrs. Richard Watson Gilder), 37
 Delacroix, Eugene, 61, 133, 134, 167, 179, 184, 219

- Delaroche, Paul, 12, 13, 225, 255
 Denner, 202
 Diaz, Emile, 145
 Diaz, Eugene, 145
 Diaz, Narcisse Virgilio de la Peña, 17, 19, 25, 26, 30, 36, 40, 53, 129-158, 156 (death), 171, 184, 192, 193, 198, 229, 231, 280
 Diaz, Thomas, 130
 Diebold, 162
 Dumas, Alexander, 115, 116
 Dupré, Jules, 26, 36, 99, 113, 130, 133, 138, 161-188, 192, 201, 202, 222, 223, 226, 227, 287
 Durand-Ruel (Art Dealer), 68, 104, 147, 148, 236

 Eaton, Wyatt, 64, 65, 66
 École Des Beaux Arts, 13, 114
Environs of Southampton, Dupré, 173
 Exposition Universelle, 1867, 61, 264

Faneurs, Les, Millet, 275
 Faure, the tenor, 112
 Feydeau, Alfred, 52
 Flandrin, 201
 Forest of Fontainebleau, 28
 Fortuny, Mario, 138
 Franco-Prussian War, 62, 145, 170, 266

 Ganne, Françoise (Père Ganne), 30, 34, 35
 Gautier, Théophile, 39, 46, 55, 256
 Géricault, Theodore, 134, 219
 Gérôme, J. L., 35, 56
 Gillet, Arsene, 133, 161
Gleaners, The, Millet, 50, 51
 Granet, 253
 Gros, Baron, 8

 Gréville (Millet's old home), 45

Hagar and Ishmael in the Desert, Millet, 24
 Hals, Franz, 202
Haymakers, The, Millet, 26, 27
 Hedouin (Engraver of Millet's works), 52
 Henriot, 281
Hoar-frost, Rousseau, 166
 Hotel Drouot, 67, 114, 232
 Hourticq, Louis, 181
 Howe, William H., 197
 Huet, Paul, 175
 Hugo, Victor, 175
 Hunt, William M., 20, 21, 41, 43, 64

 Ingres, 255

 Jacque, Charles Emile, 23, 27, 28, 167, 171, 275-289
 Jeanron (Director of The Louvre), 24
 Jordaens, 204
 Jumelin, Mme., 5, 9, 18

 Koekkoek, 200

 La Coup de Roi de Thule, 146
La Moisson, Daubigny, 261
 Le Chennevieres (Director Fine Arts), 113
 Le Dieu, Philippe, 34
 Lédru-Rollin, 21, 24
 Legion of Honor (Millet) 62, (Corot) 94, 96 97, (Diaz) 153, (Dupré) 165, 168, (Tro-
 yon) 195, 205, 228, 229, (Rousseau) 237, 238, (Dau-
 bigny) 262, 267
 Leighton, Sir Frederick, 264
 Lemaire, Catharine (Wife of Millet) 18, 29, 30, 79
 Le Roi Candaule, 146
Les Bergers, Corot, 117
 Letrone (Patron of Millet), 44

- Lock in the Valley of the Optevoz*, Rousseau, 261
Lot and his Daughters, Corot, 104
 Louvre, The, 225, 226, 261
 Low, Will H., 64, 66
 Luxembourg Gallery, 103, 283
- Maire, 216
 Maîtres d'Autrefois, Les, 73
 Mantz, Paul, 37
Man with the Hoe, Millet, 55, 57-58, 105
 Marolle, Louis-Alexandre, 15
Matinee, Une, Corot, 102
 Mazette Gate, 277
 Meissonier, J. L., 147, 281
 Merson, Luc Olivier, 255
 Michallon, Achille, 88, 89
 Mignon, 251, 252
 Millet, Charles, 5
 Millet, François, 19, 65, 66
 Millet, Jean François, 1-81; marriage, 16, 18; death, 64; and Corot, 105, 138, 142, 143, 171, 184, 194, 198, 213, 224, 228, 230, 231, 234, 237, 238, 239, 280, 287, 288
 Millet, Jean Louis Nicolas, 4, 9
Moonlight, Daubigny, 265
 Morot, G., 255
 Mouchel, 7, 8
- Napoleon III, 143, 144, 206, 261
 National Gallery, London, 180
 Nemours, Duke of, 185, 186
- Oedipe taken from Tree*, Millet, 19
 Ono, Pauline-Virginie, 17
On the River, Corot, 116
 Oudinot, Achille, 258, 259
Oxen going to their work Troyon, 202
- Paira, Michel, 131
- Pasture-land in the Limousin*, Dupré, 173, 174
Peasant Grafting a Tree, Millet, 45, 46, 47, 230
Peasant Spreading Manure, Millet, 49
 Pension for Mme. Millet, 67
 "Pere Tranquille," name for Rousseau, 219
 Petit, Jacob, 34
Plaisirs du Soir, Corot, 113
Plateau de Belle Croix, Rousseau, 241
Pond at Gylieu, Daubigny, 261
Pool, The, Rousseau, 241
 Potter, Paul, 203
 Prix de Rome Competition, 13, 14, 217, 254, 255
 Puvis de Chavannes, Pierre, 238
- Raffet, Auguste, 133
Ramasseurs de Bois, Corot, 116
 Régnault, Henri, 255
 Rembrandt, 206
 Rémond, 217
Return to the Farm, Troyon, 204
 Revolution of February, 1848, 22
 Revue des Deux Mondes, 179
 Ribera, 14
 Riocreux, 193
Rising Sun, Rousseau, 227
 Robinson, Theodore, 120, 121
 Roqueplan, Camille, 193
 Rose (Corot's friend), 92, 93
 Rousseau, Mme., 235, 237-238
 Rousseau, Théodore, 29, 35, 36, 37, 44, 48, 50, 61, 68, 122, 136, 137, 138, 142, 148, 150, 153, 154, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 171, 172, 173, 182, 184, 185, 194, 198, 201, 202, 203, 213-245, 249, 279, 280, 288

- Royal Academy, 180, 265, 266
Ruth and Boaz, Millet, 41
- Saint Jerome in the Desert*,
Daubigny, 254
Saint Jerome under Temptation, Millet, 19
- Salon, Paris, 16, 17, 19, 52, 54,
59, 165, 220, 221, 226, 253,
254, 283
- Scheffer, Ary, 134, 167, 218,
225
- Sécretan Sale, 68
- Sensier, Alfred, 31, 36-38,
43, 44, 49, 51, 53, 54, 55, 56,
57, 63, 74, 240, 277, 278, 280,
287
- Sèvres, 161
- Shaw, Quincy A., 39
- Sheep-shearer, The*, Millet, 41,
42, 54
- Shepherd, The*, Millet, 41
- Shepherdess, The*, Millet, 59,
60, 72
- Sigalon, Xavier, 134
- Souchon, 134
- Sower, The*, Millet, 39-40, 46,
65, 72
- Spring*, Millet, 66, 70
- Springtime*, Daubigny, 261
- Steinheil, Louis, 253
- Stevens, Alfred, 238
- Thoré, Theophile, 96, 220
- Trimolet, Louis, 253
- Trinity Church, Cherbourg, 10
- Trouillebert, 115, 116
- Troyon, Constant, 36, 171, 184,
191-210, 287
- Tryon, Dwight W., 258, 269,
271
- Valley Farm*, Constable, 179
- Van Marcke, Émile, 204, 205
- Vechte, 26
- Velasquez, 14
- Verboekhoven, 200
- Village of Becquigny*, Rous-
seau, 234
- Villard, 232
- Ville d'Avray, 89, 98
- Vollon, Antoine, 267
- Waiting*, Millet, 51, 54
- Watteau, 15
- Wells, H. T., 266
- Whistler, James McNeill, 265
- Willy Lot's House*, Constable,
179
- Windmill*, Troyon, 206
- Winnower*, Millet, 20, 21
- Wolff, Albert, 117, 154, 155,
156, 183, 185, 187, 201, 206
- Women Bathing*, Millet, 17
- Woman Feeding Chickens*,
Millet, 45
- Zubaran, 14

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